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# FATHER AMBROSE

THE REVELATIONS OF MAY 3d '68.

BY

STEELE MACKAYE.

Author of "Paul Kauvar," "Hazel Kirke," Etc.

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NEW YORK:

THE DESHLER WELCH PUBLISHING CO.

1894. B

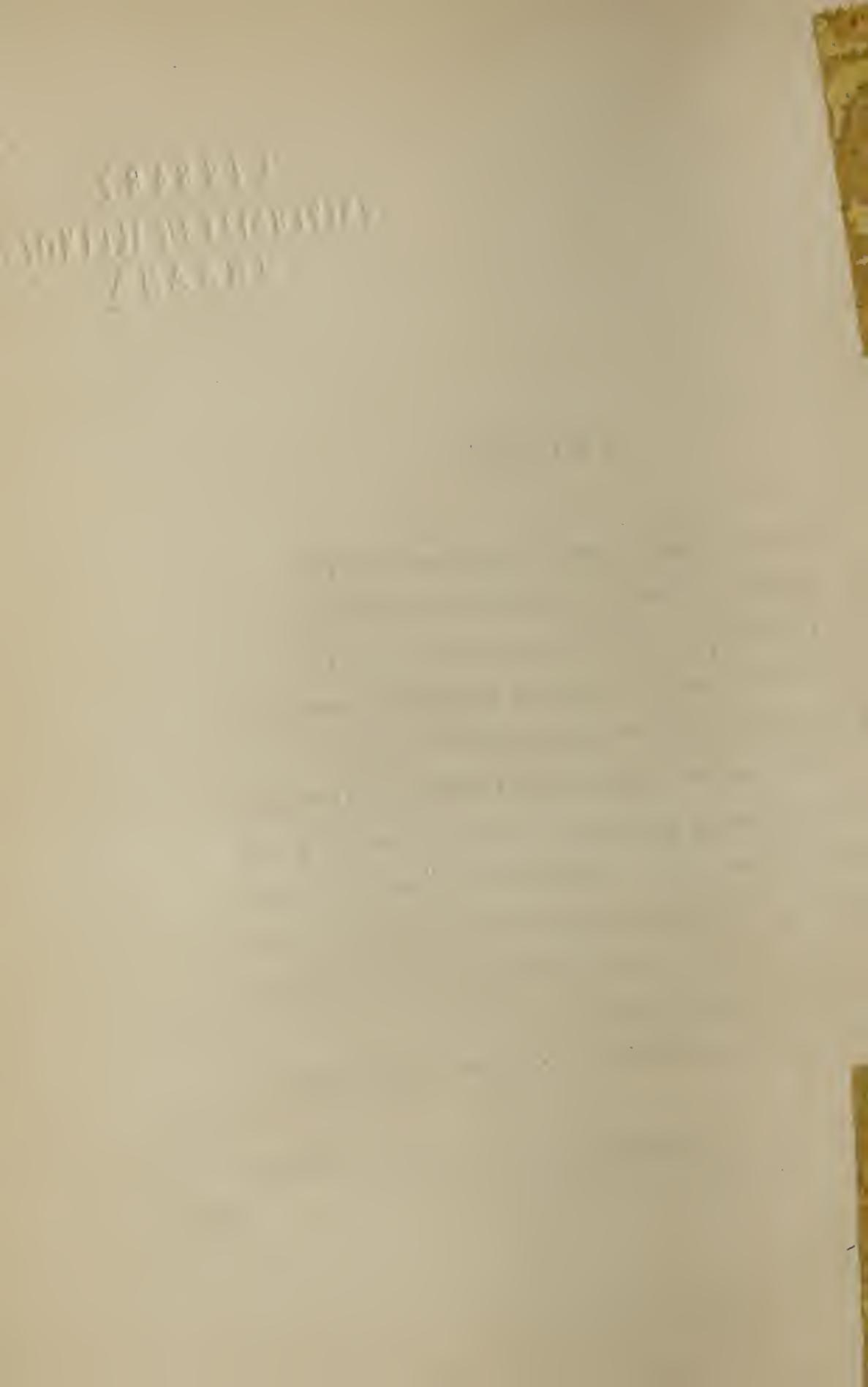


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TO  
LEWIS MORRISON,  
THE LOYAL FRIEND—AND ZEALOUS ARTIST—TO  
WHOSE STEADFAST ENCOURAGEMENT  
THESE PAGES OWE THEIR GROWTH—THIS BOOK  
IS FRATERNALLY DEDICATED BY  
STEELE MACKAYE.

678989



## PROEM.

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What a paltry word love is—in print.

What a potent reality love is—in life.

To escape certain woe—beware of it.

To experience perfect happiness await it ;  
if it approaches—welcome and woo it.

Love is the Alpha and Omega of the ages ;  
the beginning of all evil—the end of all good.

It is the most vicious virtue, and the most  
virtuous vice that tempts or inspires the race.

It is a tyrant—that sets us free ; a slave—  
that fetters us forever.

It is a relentless liar ; and yet it alone is  
true.

There is nothing that it is not—nothing  
that it does not.

Magician of magicians, it works wonders  
that transcend all understanding—but that of  
the heart.

It makes a fool of the philosopher—a sage  
of an ass.

It converts saints into sinners—sinners into  
saints.

It tortures the faithful, and fondles the  
false.

It drags purity into the pit, and lifts the  
lost from the slough of lust.

It is the most puzzling and perilous contra-  
diction that consciousness records—the primal  
paradox, and final solution of the riddle of  
life.

He is a fool who seeks it—a craven who  
shirks it—a cur who betrays it—a Man who  
keeps it—a Saint who serves it—a God who  
commands it.

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THE REVELATIONS OF MAY 3D, 1868.

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## BOOK I.

### THE STRUGGLE.

#### CHAPTER I.

##### THE AUTHORITY FOR THE FACTS.

AT last I had captured him, and he was forced to unfold the whole affair.

He had excited intense curiosity, by declaring he knew a story of real life surpassing in surprises the most audacious inventions that fiction had ever revealed. He had promised a hundred times that I should hear of these startling realities, but had escaped the keeping of his word by excuses so unimpeachable that I was forced to exercise a patience which I did not suppose that I possessed.

Now, thanks to my own cleverness, the time for my reward had come and I was determined that this opportunity should not pass without the narrative I had conspired so cunningly to secure.

I was living in a charming chateau near Fontainebleau. The doctor had received a telegram calling him imperatively to my side. He came, supposing that I was at the point of death, and found me awaiting his companionship at the daintiest dinner ever prepared by one of the foremost chefs of Paris.

I knew the doctor's weakness. But for his delight in a rare dinner I should not have dared to play him such a trick. Even with the wonder I had planned to offer, I trembled at my own temerity in attempting such a ruse.

He was the most distinguished physician of the day; one of those imperial types who reach without effort the highest rank in any walk of life which they select.

His character, too, was as glorious as his genius.

Rank and wealth sought his services with eagerness, and danced attendance on his ease, but suffering poverty never called on his great heart in vain, nor waited an instant, either for his own convenience or for his favoring service of the rich.

The feast succeeded, proving worthy of the great artist who deigned to favor us with his creative skill. When we had exhausted all the gastronomic delights of his chef d'oeuvre we lay back in lounging chairs before a brilliant fire, and smoked regalias which a Sultan might have envied. Then it was that the Scientist began his long awaited revelations, and with the following enigmatic words :

" My friend, I have been patient with the amusing device by which you have endeavored to deprive me of any excuse for further silence, because I have been more anxious to

secure an opportunity to speak than you could have been to obtain a chance to listen.

The time has come when the truth ought to be told, but I am not the one who should first communicate to the public a matter of such moment to mankind. To scientific literature I have, and shall, contribute; but historic statement requires a faculty which I do not possess, and therefore even though I were not personally associated with the circumstances, I should feel bound to entrust to another brain than my own the initial formulation of the almost incredible facts, which first commanded my respect for phenomena I once despised, but which I have since learned are of primal importance to the progress of the race.

You are the man whom I have selected to afford the world its first glimpse of the light to come. For years I have witnessed your career, and it has begotten a firm faith in the

unpretentious sincerity of your art. But for this confidence I should not permit you to hear the history of which I gave you a hint so many months ago. I know that you are a thorough man of the world, but if you are not sufficiently surfeited with its shams, and emancipated from its opinions, to be wholly indifferent to excommunication from any and every social circle, you would be exceedingly unwise to undertake the dangerous task of heralding a new dawn.

Courage and catholicity of spirit are necessary to deal justly with the radical views, fanatical antagonisms and sacred assertions involved in the monstrous strangeness of my story. To learn what I mean you must give me your word of honor that you will devote your pen to proclaiming with unflinching freedom of diction the facts I unfold, but you must assume all responsibility for any consequences resulting to yourself from the publication of

the startling statements I shall make. At the right instant I shall stand at your side and proudly share all you may suffer, but unless you are confident that you contemn contumelily, forbid me now and forever to speak of this affair."

One year has passed since the memorable night when this matter was committed to my care. It has taken many months to study the astounding documents and to become acquainted with the exceptional personages connected with the occurrences which it is now my duty to relate. Names have been changed and such modifications of time and place adopted as are necessary to protect the living from discovery and attack. As time ripens concealments will cease and those whom destiny dedicates to the highest service of man will publicly appear. For the present it is enough to state that the authority for the facts herein set forth is a character whose name is a synonym for truth, in the social as well as the scientific world.

## CHAPTER II.

## THE DISCOVERY.

ONE day in his life Ambrose Bonnard will never forget.

That day is the 3d of May, 1868,—a day when the monotonous routine of his simple existence was interrupted by an experience so overwhelming that a thousand untouched recesses of his being awoke to consciousness, and wrought with ruinous rapidity a profound destruction of the foundations of his faith.

The vigor of a virile spring quivered in the air, its irrepressible delight scintillating throughout the brilliant spaces of a cloudless sky.

The breasts of the birds, bursting with exuberant bliss, greeted the glory of the afternoon with gushes of gay song.

The Champs Elysees was crowded with carriages filled with beauty that dazzled and faces that beamed. Its walks were packed with animated masses of humanity, palpitating with the happy hopes awakened by that early season of the year, which sows so freely the bitter seeds of illusion in the receptive soil of youth.

The good young Father Ambrose was strolling along the Rue de la Faizanderie, in Passy, toward that broad avenue through which the merry multitude of Paris pours into the Bois de Boulogne.

He was lost in a deep, delicious dream : a dream of happiness for others—the only happiness his chastened life had ever known, the only happiness for which his lowly spirit had ever hoped or prayed.

He had just united by the holy sacrament of marriage two lives, whose souls by the invisible sacrament of love, were already made one.

Absorbed in thoughts of the unutterable happiness of these newly-wedded lives, and keenly alive to the cheering atmosphere of joy which surrounded him, the priest passed with a pensive smile upon his lips, a charming villa among a mass of vines behind a high, but ornamental fence.

Suddenly a cry of anguish rent the air—a woman's anguish, terror laden—the wail of a great love crushed by a cruel surprise.

The priest turned, touched to his very vitals by the pain of that woman's voice.

The fierce bay of an approaching hound was the only echo awakened by that frantic cry.

With every nerve tense and each sense quickened by the shock, the curate gazed in all directions.

The street was deserted; not a person in sight, except on the distant Boulevard, from which was borne the softened hum of children's happy cries and their elders' careless chatter.

There was a soul-seeking quality in that cry which shot to the inmost depths of the father's heart. He realized at once that a calamity of the most appalling kind was at hand. His flesh crept. A shudder ran through his spare frame, while a wild longing to leap to the assistance of the sufferer made him impatient to discover who she was.

As he stood, wondering which way to turn, his attention was attracted by the strange conduct of a dog, which sprang over a high hedge of arbor-vitæ and with mad growls bounded furiously against the front door of the villa behind the fence. The door opened. The hound tore into the house. A woman appeared, peering anxiously after the hound, hesitating, powerless to decide some question that oppressed her. Presently she turned and looked into the street with a distracted stare. One sight of that wretched face was enough for the zealous priest. In an instant he reached the gate and

pulled the bell. Its clang startled the puzzled creature at the door into an exclamation of alarm.

"Courage, madame! It is I, Father Ambrose. Let me in. I will help you."

His sympathetic voice brought the woman to her senses. She hurried forward and, opening the gate, cried out in joy :

"Ah, the good God has sent you!"

"What has happened?"

"I don't know. I fear the worst!"

"To whom?"

"You shall see. Follow me. Hurry!"

Shutting the gate with a reckless slam, the woman ran to the door of the villa, holding it open as the father hastened in ; then, closing it, she paused a second and quickly deciding, glided up the broad stairs before them, muttering to herself :

"No matter! We can trust the priest."

The long frock followed closely, in silence.

They reached the upper hallway. A large window at one end opened upon the street. A seat was built into the window. In front of this seat appeared a picture grotesque and weird.

The body of a young girl lay in a graceless heap, face downward upon the floor, awfully still. Above her, immovable as bronze, watching with glaring eyes, stood a monstrous black hound.

With terrified face the woman pointed to the almost shapeless mass beneath the brute, whispering :

“ It is there ! ”

That “ it ” expressed the repulsion which ignorance suffers at sight of death.

The woman shrank back ; the man bounded forward. The beast, recognizing the approach of pity, sprang out of the way.

The messenger of love lifted the body tenderly and laid it under the light, upon the broad cushion of the seat.

The heart had ceased to beat. The pulse had passed away. The sweat of death lay on her placid brow.

The young father deeply moved uttered a groan of dismay. The hound moaned in sympathy, and, with an unceasing woeful whine licked the ghastly face that lay in the light of that smiling day.

Youth, in all its glorious fullness was stricken into the endless impotence of death by some sinister cause, whose cruelty was emphasized tenfold by the grace and beauty of its victim.

The priest, with the skill of years devoted to disaster, examined more closely the lifeless body before him. Suddenly he sank upon his knees with a reverent cry and crossed himself.

"Mother of God, have pity," he faltered.  
"Spare this life in death!"

Then, springing to his feet, he turned to the frightened peasant behind him, commanding :

"Quick ! to Doctor Lefort. At the corner on your left. Say Father Ambrose wants him at once. There is a life to save ! "

The woman gave an hysterical laugh of delight and disappeared.

The corpse of the young girl was the tomb of a living child.

To the religious faith of the fervent fanatic there was more than a life—there was a soul—to save.

## CHAPTER III.

## THE SOMNIPATHIST.

AMBROSE BONNARD was the son of a soldier whose wife was the sister of a Benedictine monk. His father, who was a Captain of dragoons and a fiery enthusiast in all he ever undertook, was killed leading the wild charge of a forlorn hope in Algeria. His mother died of a broken heart, struck senseless by the sudden news of her husband's fate.

From the hour of the infant's birth the monk considered him a special charge imposed by Providence upon his humanity. He resolved to cherish and dedicate his future to the saintly perfection of an ascetic life.

As the child developed he proved to be exceedingly delicate and dreamy, full of strange flections, introspective and given to the

most mystic imaginings. His spiritual perceptions were vivid, clear, and strong. His sense of physical things or of worldly affairs was so obtuse that he passed at school as a dullard whom no one could understand.

From books he could learn nothing, but his inner commerce with the spirit gave him at moments an eloquence that thrilled the puzzled auditors who chanced to hear his words.

At seven, spells of trance began. In these he often lay for hours, to all appearance dead. He was one of those anomalous human beings whose sensitive organization is so susceptible to occult influence that it passes readily into a somnambulistic condition, during which events take place that are unexplained by any hypothesis which science or philosophy has thus far advanced.

At fourteen, he entered upon a course of training with his uncle that was mediæval in its merciless severity. Now and then the

exercises produced religious ecstacies which caused a frequent recurrence of the trance.

On some of these occasions there would issue from the lips of the corybantic lad the most wonderful declarations, astounding his orthodox companion by the reckless and poetic force with which he prophesied a coming day of religious liberation for the race.

The worthy monk, growing thoroughly alarmed at the rhapsodic boldness of the boy, decided to confide to the learned abbot of his cloister the secret of his nephew's suspicious visitations.

The superstition-ridden man feared that the devil was snatching his beloved charge from God.

Before he could confer with his superior, however, he was killed by the falling of his horse when returning from a mission of mercy which he had undertaken for the parish priest.

At the death of the monk, the priest whom he had served regarded the sole relative of his dead friend as a ward to whom the accident had bound him by most sacred ties. Inspired by this sentiment, he took the youth into his own home, devoting himself most faithfully to his education for the Church.

From the date of his uncle's death the terrible severities of the ascetic system were superseded by the comparatively easy discipline which prepares the novitiate for the unpretentious labors of a curate's life.

In his new home his health improved, but his naturally handsome face never lost the scars of care which those early years of self-denial had left upon it. When later he was admitted to holy orders, he performed the functions of his office with an unaffected sincerity that endeared him deeply to all "who labored or were heavy laden" in the little world he served.

His spells of trance had now become most rare, but still, at long intervals continued to occur, especially when he had been more deeply stirred than usual by the unexpected joy or sorrow of any of his flock.

At the time of the incident at the villa he was the curate of the little Church of "St. John the Beloved," at Passy, where, during a residence of eighteen months, he had won the reverence and love even of those most ready to mock the faith he followed.

By nature and unique experience he was far superior to his environment. Latent in his breast were powers and passions of whose existence he was wholly unaware. His unselfish soul, untainted by one touch of vanity, little realized that it possessed the ardent valor of the soldier and the patient resignation of the saint, although the slightest cruelty to others promptly roused the daring of the first, and any trial to himself the fortitude so impressive in the last.

Mystic, ascetic, sensitively sympathetic, recklessly enthusiastic, with strong spiritual impulses, but without the slightest worldly sense, such was the rare and pathetic personality which fate, or Providence, had called to meet the trying circumstances which occurred in the lonely villa on that glowing day of spring.

## CHAPTER IV.

## AUDACITY THAT WAS DIVINE.

WITH infinite compassion, the curate resumed his inquisition of the dead.

One fair arm of the unfortunate hung over the seat.

The brute at her side, powerless to word its grief, crouched, still moaning, and lapped the fine, pale skin of his inanimate mistress with a tenderness that touched to tears the solitary witness of his distress.

No human being ever expressed a more humane commiseration than the eye, tones, and actions of that black beast revealed to the soul of the ecclesiastic that memorable day.

Deeply moved at the presence of such a spiritual grace as pity in a dog, the pious spectator stooped and fondled the hound with a

feeling of fellowship he had not felt before, even for one of his own kin or cloth.

While doing this, he noticed that the animal was sniffing suspiciously at his mistress' hand.

Lifting the limp arm, he saw that the fragile fingers were tightly closed by the last strong throes of death upon a mass of paper.

Gently, as though he feared the sleeper might awake, he loosened that pain-locked clasp and released a letter, in which, by accident, he read this fatal line :

" You have never been—can never be—my wife."

He placed the rumpled letter in his pocket, intending none should see it who had not a sacred right to the secret it contained.

Alas ! he already knew that the shock of shame had sent a sensitive creature to its Creator before she had known the purifying anguish or ennobling compensations of maternity.

While these thoughts were passing through his mind, death, having overcome the woman, was fast completing its possession of the other.

Once more he felt the body of the lifeless for a sign of the living.

Only the faintest flickerings responded to his anxious touch.

He was seized with a mad yearning to rescue this unknown, who had all at once become so strangely dear to him! A deep, passionate determination took entire possession of his will.

What a tragic reversal of Nature's order was here!

The grave preceded the cradle in the story of this life unseen.

How keep the unborn alive in the breast of the dead till the deliverer could arrive?

He must do it at any cost.

Warmth could save this waif, who might yet prove a veritable king of men. No ordinary heat, however; no mere mechanical cal-

oric, could perform this miracle. Only that animating vibration which radiates through the flesh from the sovereign soul itself could accomplish such a wonder. Nothing but the warmth of the living could preserve this fast-ebbing life from death.

The violence of his mental activity, as these thoughts stirred his brain, produced a semi-visionary state. Like a flash the past illumined the present; the old man's voice sounded clearly in his ears once more, repeating the oft-told tale which his uncle's cruel faith had taught him to believe was possible to the unborn innocent who failed to command the holy office of baptism; the sacrament essential to save a newly-created spirit from the power of the fiend.

To have lived, even in the dark unconsciousness of the pre-natal state, without baptism would condemn to eternal hopelessness the blameless creature whose little heart was beating in this corpse.

This was the horrible certainty which his relative's fanaticism had convinced him threatened the unborn.

Father Ambrose had been schooled too early in this monstrous creed to realize what an infamous libel on the love of God it is. It never occurred to him to analyze or question the truth of the doctrines which austere training had so assiduously beaten into his belief.

In the presence of the situation now confronting him, he was filled with the unutterable anguish which the thought of misery to others always caused to the divinity in himself. A sudden inspiration revealed the one fearful way which might insure success.

At the critical moment the mother's pulse had failed.

His pulse, the pulse of the one whom the friendless called a father, should supply the mother's place. The spiritual Parent would complete the creative work which the natural parent had begun.

He knew that every fold of clothing between his strong, hot heart and that unborn babe lessened its certainty of salvation. He must get as close to that quivering spark as nature would permit. To risk failure was to him a crime. Not the slightest shadow of a chance to save that helpless being from eternal darkness should be lost!

A low mind or a petty spirit would have hesitated.

Not so this simple servant of the outcast Nazarene, whose one great mission was to save.

No vulgar concern regarding the opinions of the vile belittled his noble mind at a moment so supreme.

“He whom God commands heeds not the voice of the world.”

Through an open door he saw a bed.

With the strength of a great hope, he stripped the lifeless form and laid it tenderly beneath the blankets.

The bridal couch had become a bier. He would convert it into life's triumphal car. This bier should become a bed of birth and bring forth the living fruit of this hapless woman's love.

Glowing with a reckless enthusiasm, and unconscious of all but the salvation he sought to achieve, the uncanonized saint, Ambrose, speedily bared his body, crept close to the dead, and clasped its icy flesh with the burning ardor of an intense, but chaste, desire.

For the first time in his whole existence this noble son of man held a clotheless woman to his naked breast.

Clotheless?

Not to worthy eyes.

The celestial mantle of innocence—a far more certain protection to purity than any woven by a worldly hand—enwrapped him, and the sanctity of a holy purpose hallowed his embrace.

To the pure in heart—whose spiritual vision undimmed by the dust of any low idea, is quick to see God behind a deed of man—this priest's first folding of a woman's form can only appear sublime — consecrated by the grandeur of an audacity that was divine.

## CHAPTER V.

## THE DESECATING STARE OF VULGAR EYES.

FATHER AMBROSE lay, with eyes fast closed, detached from all sense of self, by zealous supplication of the Virgin whose divine maternity he sought with ardent faith, at this most solemn moment.

So absorbed was he that all perception of the flight of time, or of his own anomalous position, was suspended.

His mystic communion was interrupted by a blow.

The dog, who had followed every action of the priest with strained attention, perplexed at the endless silence sprang upon the bed.

Ambrose, startled, opened his eyes, and met those of the hound watching him in anxious eagerness.

Realizing the life-giving potency of even a brute's affection, his superstitious confidence regarded the creature as the envoy of the heavenly mother, sent by her providential influence to fortify the energies which were struggling for the life of the unborn.

Lifting the coverings he made a sign which his companion understood so well that he quickly stretched his full warm length against the body of the one who less than an hour before had been the dearest in the world to him,

What a bizarre blending of animation and mortality the spectacle presented!

There lay death, between two lives, separated by the accident of creation—united by the design of affection.

On one side a life vowed to heaven—on the other a life fatally bound to earth ; each of these lives penetrating the dead, and co-mingling, to preserve another life, which the credulous ascetic believed was on the verge of hell!

The man believed that he was clinging to a coffin of flesh, in which life was confined. The beast felt that he was fondling a friend who lay in mute submission to some misfortune which the faithful slave could feel, but could not comprehend.

The priest sought only to save the living, while the dog lavished his devotion in a vain endeavour to comfort the dead.

Both however sublimated by that mystery called Love—that omnipotence which lifts all—levels all—and so often asserts the equivalence of creatures who appear the most opposed in natural rank.

\* \* \* \* \*

The house was deserted. In spite of the cries which for a time had echoed through its halls, no signal of response had reached the Father, save those of the servant and the dog.

She whose offspring lay in present peril, had doubtless been sole mistress of the house; while the master had departed, never to return.

And the woman who had flown so swiftly, with that nervous laugh upon her lips, had she, too, deserted the betrayed?

These questions sped through the watcher's mind until influences too insidious to arouse resistance, slowly drifted his attention into channels, of whose dangerous reefs and shoals he knew as little as a child.

The priest's gaze fell upon the face beside him.

The silky, gold-brown hair, spread in magnificent profusion upon her pillow, glistened like the dark, luminous background, on which the great Titian loved to paint his imperial Bella Donnas. The ivory fleshed tints of her features possessed the same ineffable transparence which so enchanteth the eye in the immortal works of that master of the Renaissance.

There was a nobility of proportion in the symmetry of her shapely head that betokened both high breeding and large brain. The face

was full of force and refinement. It had a fascination peculiarly its own.

The longer the curate gazed the more completely he perceived the wondrous grace that glorified that countenance.

The brows, penciled with delicate decision, combined a breadth that was commanding with a serenity supremely sweet.

The eyes were signless, gleaming no longer with the glances of a noble mind that scarce a moment since gazed through their hazel lenses. Their lids had fallen in meek surrender to their mortal foe, and lay with an impotence that was pathetic upon the windows of the spirit world.

The nose, however, had a look of life contrasting most uncannily with the ashen-hued rigidity around it. Its dainty nostrils—expanded by their last convulsive effort to retain the breath of life—appeared almost to quiver; while the chiseled elegance of its formation was unmarred by any touch of death's disfiguring finger.

But her mouth ! O ! that winsome, wayward, virtuous mouth ! So incapable of wrong itself—so provocative of wrong in others ! In the delicate lines of those lifeless lips strength and tenderness, passion and purity, earnestness and archness, gravity and gaiety, were so subtly interwoven that, though still and stiff, they were irresistibly bewitching.

And there, uplifted in the mellow light—its innocently wrecking lips just parted, by the last soft sigh that set the spirit free—this matchless human mouth revealed, with perilous plenitude, the ravishing exquisiteness of its magic curves.

From the subtle sorcery of that guileless contemplation, Ambrose, the simple hearted, was destined never to escape.

\*     \*     \*     \*

Faintly, from afar, the solemn measure of a funeral march was wafted to the ears of this servant of the sanctuary, and as the dirge of the

dead grew nearer, the warning tone of its desolate wail, awakened him to his senses.

A soldier of the State was passing through the busy Boulevard to the deathless quiet of an honored grave.

And he—a soldier of the Holy Cross—to what did his wanderings tend?

This question smote his conscience, as he lay listening to the mournful movement, already melting in the distance. The sting of the interrogation delivered him, for a time, from the fascinating sway to which he had unconsciously submitted. A shame he scarcely recognized assailed him. He dumbly felt he was in danger. Of what, he instinctively disdained to ask; nevertheless in obedience to the force of custom, when oppressed with vague emotions that escaped his comprehension, he quickly crossed himself.

In making the sacred sign, the embrace of the dead was broken. This act recalled him

to a sense of the actual facts around him, and he realized that for many moments no signal of existence had reached him from the life he sought to save.

Indignant at the long delay in the arrival of assistance, he abandoned himself to one last desperate effort to revive the dying babe.

Believing the increase of peril to the infant due to the cessation of his prayers, he grasped more closely the casket of human clay, and concentrating all his will upon the one precious possibility of saving the unseen, he passed through prayer into a state of pious beatitude, and thence into cataleptic trance.

Man and priest had disappeared. The somniphathist had reappeared with all the possibilities of wonder which that implies.

\*     \*     \*     \*     \*

The silence seemed to deepen, and even the sibilant fly to rest, as the roseate radiance of the early evening illumined this motionless group.

Stark—and in mocking contrast with the merry motion of the motes swirling in the flecks of sunlight shining through the blinds—a feminine form, in ghastly beauty stretched, was couched twixt man and beast.

The coverings of the bed slipping from her shoulders, half bared the marvellous modelling of her pearly, girlish breast.

The hound, resting his great jaw upon the first soft undulations of her breathless bosom, watched the cruel stillness of her features with sad and wistful eyes.

The man's head, bowed by his absorbing commune with the spirit, reclined against the firm young flesh of her lovely shoulder with the confiding abandon of a child.

Gradually an ashen pallor crept over the Father's face. The skin tightened slowly upon his worn features. His eyes sunk into their sockets, the lids lifting enough to unveil the lower edges of the iris. The ghastliness of the

priest's appearance became more corpse-like than that of the body he held in his stiffening arms. Each moment he seemed sinking more deeply into death, while her aspect softened with a growing look of life.

The living was passing into twilight—the dead was nearing dawn.

Suddenly the dog started. Up went his head, with a side-long turn exceedingly inquisitive, his eyes focused intently on the woman's form.

An almost imperceptible vibration was passing through her frame. All at once it was convulsed by a violent throe, which frightened the hound into a half sitting posture, every fibre of his flesh turning rigid with alarm.

Something unearthly was happening. Something vague and dreadful, transfixing, with a formless fear, the lone almost paralyzed spectator of this nondescript occurrence.

His crouching body drawn back, his head

outstretched and strained, the brute's eyes roamed, askant, as though he felt some shadow hovering in the sunshine above the bed of death.

With electric velocity, the horror reached an awful climax; driving the dog into a corner, his eyes ablaze with phosphorescent light, he yelped in abject fear.

First, a tremor had appeared upon the woman's lips, then her nostrils quivered. Finally, as though struck by some terrific current from an invisible galvanic pile, her eyes flew open with a ghastly stare, her whole form writhed and twisted, her knees jerked up and met her shivering chin, a sickening guttural gurgigation issued from her throat, her jaw gyrated, she gasped hideously, shrieked and fell back limp, relaxed, breathing, but unconscious, across the body of her motionless companion.

The dead was living. The living quiet and livid as the dead.

Bare, and in closest contact, the coverings in wild disorder half thrown from their limbs, reposed a living man and woman, who had never yet exchanged a single word or sign of recognition.

\* \* \* \*

The brank of a bell rang through the house.

The dog, encouraged by a familiar sound, sprang to the open window with a bark.

A man at the gate was impatient for admittance. The delayed response annoyed him. He rang more sharply. Surprise succeeded irritation, and anger both, as his summons still remained unanswered. With an oath, he pulled the gong again. Its dismal clatter died away unheeded as before.

Puzzled and enraged, the stranger sought some means of scaling the tall iron fence.

It was evident he had come on business that was pressing, for his movements were decided and alert.

He noticed that the gate to the adjoining grounds was open and the wall between the garden of the villa and its neighbor of only medium height. With a hasty glance about him, to see if he were watched, he hurried through the neighboring gateway. With a cat's agility, he passed the barrier of brick, and striding to the house, sought entrance at the front and rear without success.

Finally he climbed a trellis work leading to a window at the top of the veranda.

He was greeted by a joyful bay from the waiting hound, who plainly knew the resolute intruder. Attracted by this rejoicing, he hurried to the window of the room,—where primal innocence lay powerless to escape the desecrating stare of vulgar eyes.

After warding off the animal's too demonstrative caresses, he was about to vault into the chamber when, his glance falling on the bed, he paused, rooted to the spot.

For a minute he gazed stupefied, then recovering his faculties, he burst into a loud and ribald laugh.

The revolting vocal insult was checked by some malevolent inspiration, which doubtless pleased him, for with a malicious smile, he quickly drew a packet from his pocket and flung it at the priest.

The dreamer started, turned, and, not even yet fully aroused from his anomalistic cerebrations, he flung his arm across the bosom of his comatose companion.

The malefic spy greeted the guileless Father's action with a coarse guffaw, and then descending as he came, in haste, he ran through the gateway—which he could open from within—and slamming its iron grating, with manifest contempt, he strode swiftly toward the “Bois,” his brain alert with pitiless determination.

As he rushed on, he was stopped by a strident voice, crying :

“ Pouska ! Pouska ! ”

Turning he saw a coupé held up abruptly in the middle of the street. A woman was just alighting. He recognized her. She ran toward him. He increased his pace. The woman shouted :

“ Stay ! Madame is dying ! Dead, perhaps ! ”

Pouska langhed back :

“ By my faith ! A new name for the old sin. I shall remember it, Clarisse ! ”

“ Come back, and see.”

“ I have seen ! A sight to make the devil blush ! ”

“ Come back, I say ! Monsieur de Vaugar must know.”

With a frightful oath, Pouska shouted in return :

“ Ho ! Don’t fear ! He shall know ! ”

Quickly turning the corner, the mocker disappeared.

## CHAPTER VI.

## HUMILIATION MOST ABJECTLY HUMAN.

CLARISSE looked into space—dumbfounded.

A strong hand fell upon her shoulder, a stern voice saying :

“ Come ! come !—be quick !”

“ At once—Monsieur.”

The woman had returned. She unlocked the gate, and hurriedly led the way. As she neared the house, she stopped in the path before the porch, exclaiming with a shudder :

“ Ah God ! how still it is !”

The doctor, realizing the peril of delay, shouted with impatience :

“ Open, at once !”

The woman obeyed.

If the interloper’s blow had slain the somniphathist, he might have had good reason to be

grateful to him who struck it. As it was, it awoke him to a life which was forever changed by the unfolding of events that followed.

Fate, Providence, Nature, accident—which-ever one may choose to call it—played wanton work with the consciousness of this singular character.

The velocity of cerebral energy, as the brain passes from its unconsciousness into its conscious activity, is incalculably great.

Between the precise second when Ambrose Bonnard was struck by the package of the spy, and the arrival of the doctor, there could not have elapsed more than five minutes, and yet, during that little time he had lived through an age of asomatous emotions.

The first sense, he afterwards remembered, impressed him, simply, with a meaningless repose.

Gradually he felt himself evironed by a glorious, golden mist. An ethereal, delicious,

ardor penetrated every pore. Delicate vibrations glided through his flesh—deepening into pulses he failed to understand—strengthening into throbings that drenched his soul with rapturous sense.

Seraphic music rose through long crescendo measures into resonance divine, then swept, fading, into silence quivering with supernal peace. Peace, where self—by self-extinction —found self-perfection in the Un-self—God.

He had found the Ever. The other was the None. That dim memory the phantom, whose delusions Almightyness designed to make All-lovingness more clear.

A fresh phase supervened.

In this realm of the Reconciled—the Nirvana of the Vedas—another life than his, yet one most wholly his, grew out of his, and took form besides him. This life held him in a folding intimate and chaste ; wrought a sweet entrancement that flooded every faculty with infinity of force.

Ages—eons—passed, and yet this permeating union grew more absolute and strong ; expanding into delectations more unbounded and complete.

Alas ! to Entities yet earthly even Eternity hath an end.

Such Archangelic joys only the consummated manhood of Celestial essence could endure.

His paradise was shattered by a shock of phrenesied bliss.

Felicity passed into transport—transport into ecstacy where agony became delight—culminating in a spasm transcendant, sovereign, supreme.

Omnipotence throbbed through every fibre !

Was he the atom—becoming the All ?

Was he the man—absorbing God ?

Had the colossal throe of Time arrived ?

Was this the Ultimate Consummation ?

No ! it was annihilation—the return to non-existence.

A tornado of horror succeeded the beatific serenity of Nirvana grace.

The immeasurable spaces were falling apart !

The eternal ages were shrinking, backward, into one obliterating flash of worthless time.

Monstrous absurdity !

A stupendous illusion ; begotten by the last mental paroxysm which occurs when the individual is torn from the Universal, and sweeps from a completely spiritual into a partially physical state of existence.

A mighty convulsion rent the very foundations of his being, and then, with a great sob, like the cry of the new born, the somnipathist fell into physical—that is self-consciousness.

He was cast from Eternity into time ;—from the Elemental, and the Real into the formal, and the phantasmal ;—from Heaven to earth —the only abode of Hell.

The crash, of this prodigious antithesis, stunned him. He lay dazed, panting, trembling,

prostrate, weak, and—for a second—helpless as a babe at its first breath.

For a little span the priest abandoned himself to that false sense of well-being which weakness feels in rest.

Presently his body began to tingle with a subtle influx of new force. His contact with the living he did not yet perceive, but the polar principle of nature wrought its puissant work. His nervous centres soon were loaded with a potency bewildering to the simple man. He mistook this elemental movement for some miraculous presence, pervading him in order to preserve the child. He was lost in gratitude for the benignant visitation, when he was suddenly transfixed, by a dread suspicion.

Had the corpse breathed?

He could not move. He dared not open his eyes. He lay shivering from head to foot with smothering emotions, the cause of which he was too dazed to faintly comprehend,

A soft sigh stirred the air.  
He stiffened with an awful fear!  
“Leo—Leo—Leo!”  
This name, whispered weakly, but in tenderest tones, floated through the room.

It stung every faculty of the holy father into tumultuous life. His eyes stared. He turned—glared at the body—and started from it with a scream of horror.

“My God it lives!”  
To the ignorant servant the dead had become an “it.” To the superstitious ascetic, the living fell into a neuter—far more absolute than death.

With deep moans of anguish he shrank beside the bed—crushed beneath a morbid shame.

He—the celibate—had violated his most sacred vows—had clasped the carnal—been invaded by its fiendish fire—been polluted by its passionnal poison—been quickened by its quivering quintessence!

The sin of sins—and woe of woes—was his!  
With throes of spirit—no common clod can  
comprehend—this angelic victim of ascetic  
craze, grovelled, groaning, on the floor.

The hound lapped his naked feet with  
sympathetic cries, unconsciously performing  
the most touching sacrament.

An audacity that was divine had wrought  
humiliation most abjectly human, upon the  
stern believer in the sin of sex.

The creed-crushed man thought God less  
tender than a dog.

Surely there was more of the Christ in the  
sympathetic tongue of the hound than in the  
theistic teachings of the monk!

## CHAPTER VII.

## A CRUSHING CREED.

THE shame of the anchorite cut him adrift from all hope; plunged him into the bottomless pit of an appalling despair. The foul falsehoods, which had been deeply implanted in the impressionable nature of the child, now agonized the man with the conviction that he had committed that awful, mysterious, inexplicable, but eternally blighting, act—"the unpardonable sin."

How many of the noblest and most innocent of human beings have been driven into Bedlam by this diabolic idea; a conception of priestly cunning, intended to terrorize the race, and force from the fears of men the tribute essential to keep alive the wrecking rule of the self-

elected middleman—of a wretched man-made, God!

The treachery of Judas to Jesus was a saintly deed, compared to the betrayal of the Christ which ecclesiasticism has perpetrated for centuries, by the propagation of this crafty lie.

Why should God devise a sin of whose nature he kept men completely ignorant, and yet for whose unconscious, and unintentional commission He could provide no saving pardon?

And yet, many of the most brilliant minds in Christendom have been so overthrown, by the persistent repetition to their childhood of this dastard doctrine, that they have not only accepted this colossal insult to God's decency, but have become such moral cowards that they dared not discuss the mystery, for fear they should, thereby, unwittingly commit the sin.

What iniquitous audacity to heap such horror upon a helpless, and long-trusting humanity!

What a heartless requital of its unquestioning confidence!

What a crime of crimes to proclaim—in the hallowed name of the meek messenger of absolute and boundless Love—a doctrine whose perfection of cruelty the most demoniac and artful hatred could not possibly surpass.

\*     \*     \*     \*

The sound of footsteps, upon the path outside, checked the torments of the self-accused.

Some one at the lower door, thundered:

“Open at once!”

The priest recognized the doctor’s voice. In an instant he was thrilled by a resurrecting thought; the dazzling light of a divine hope flooded the dark abyss of his despair!

How magnificent such a mercy, to send such an inspiration to his shame!

The sin might not be the pardonless monstrosity he feared.

He dared to hope, for Heaven had shown him a long and cruel process of purgation.

This was the penance his self-contempt prescribed.

The doctor and the peasant were at hand. They should witness his iniquity. They should behold his nakedness, and cover him with contempt. They should drive him forth, an outcast, forever, from the love or confidence of men. A desolate life time of martyrdom to scorn and contumely, might atone for his criminal forgetfulness of the vileness of human flesh.

All perception of the noble motive that had spurred him to his act was buried, beneath his mad horror at the carnal touch. He believed that touch had stirred into fury the polluting flames of hell. Nothing less than long years of human loathing could purge him from their taint.

The door below was opening; all his hopes of happiness on earth were on the verge of irreparable destruction.

A less heroic will than this would have recoiled, cringing and terrified, from this approaching ruin. He—on the contrary—rose with a cry of gratitude—stood erect—naked—in an attitude of fearless triumph—waiting to welcome the stings, the taunts, the revilings, which were to cleanse him from his sin.

How magnificent his presence as he loomed in that broad light, with leonine dignity! The head of an apostle, upon the form of an Apollo! The transfigured face of a saint, shining with the radiant beauty of self annihilation, above the lithe and superb body of an athlete!

What a glorious sire of a glorious race he might have been, but for the vicious views of nature's virtue! This sublime union of animal force and divine affection, sought to be loathed, despised, execrated, by the fellow mortals whom he loved so truly, and for whose salvation he would willingly have suffered unutterable pangs.

Footsteps were flying up the stairs!

Oh! monstrous price of mercy—for the tender crime of love! monstrous creed that exacts it!

Oh sycophantic fear!—that sues for or accepts, the lightest favor of such a friend!

And yet Ambrose the hero-hearted—was the prey of this crushing creed!

## CHAPTER VIII.

## HUMAN AFFECTION AND FIENDISH FAITH.

LET us hold on to time, and turn the pages back.

When Clarisse finally succeeded in reaching Lefort, she broke into superabundant exclamations.

“On sir ! don’t let it grow too late ! Hurry ! Something horrible has happened ! He says you must come, and come quickly !”

“Who’s he ?” growled the doctor.

“It’s Father Ambrose, and he told me—”

“That’s enough ! I’ll go with you at once.”

The doctor knew the zealous slave of sorrow well, and never failed to respond, most promptly, to all of his appeals. He ordered his coachman to drive to his house, and entered his carriage with Clarisse.

Once at home he speedily secured a large valise of medicines and lances,—then hastened to the villa. Long as it took to arrive, and carefully as he questioned the servant, he failed to draw anything from her which could help him to conjecture the character of the case he was about to undertake.

Two facts, alone, were obvious.

First—some extraordinary calamity had occurred.

Second—a suspicious mystery, involving either misfortune, crime, or both, was connected with this occurrence.

Mystery, however, was no affair of his.

For misfortune the Priest.

For crime—the Police.

For calamity—the Leech.

The last, only, belonged to him. He would cope with that shortly, but would not permit any other possibilities to disturb him in the least.

Little did he imagine, as he hastened to that stranger's house, how absorbing this mystery, with its grief and crime, was to become. Little did he suppose that its abnormal features were to open a new realm of thought to him, and to lead to the investigations of facts, which were destined, ultimately, to startle the scientific world.

As Lefort entered the villa, he was greeted by Bonnard's cry of welcome to the coming shame, on which he dared to count for the salvation of his soul. While the doctor failed to recognize the voice of his young friend, his practiced ear detected, instantly, the discordant tint of madness in the tones that startled him.

Clarisso stood stunned, still holding the door open.

The doctor—slinging the surgical case suspended at his side from his shoulder—exclaimed !

"What's that?"

"I don't know sir." Replied Clarisse, shuddering.

"That was a madman's voice." Muttered the physician to himself.

The unnerved female heard him, and, over-powered by the long continued agitation of the day, burst into lamentations.

"Saints save us! What more? Is there no end to this? Has the Lord no mercy?"

"Where is the sufferer? Interrupted the surgeon, sternly. "Cease these cries, and answer, or I will leave the house at once."

Cowed by his manner, and terrified at the idea of his desertion, the maid turned, half fainting, to the stairway, and crept, with blanched face and tremulous reluctance up the stairs.

As Lefort followed her, his thoughts came thick and fast. Had there been murder here? Was it the work of a maniac? Was he still at

large, and waiting for another victim? They reached the landing. The woman paused, astonished to find the hallway empty.

"Go on. What now?" asked the doctor, rendered uneasy in spite of himself by his own reflections, and the fear-ridden hesitations of the girl.

Clarisso, moving forward, said, with bated breath :

"They're gone!"

The words had scarcely fallen from her lips, when Lefort, for the first time in his life, felt the touch of terror.

As Clarisse arrived in front of the chamber door she threw up her hands, with a frantic scream, and fell senseless. The doctor rushed forward to lift her up; the door of the bedroom was shut with a terrific bang; the sound of a key turning in the lock was heard, and a voice of hopeless misery from within, moaned out these puzzling words :

"No no !    Damnation first !    Damnation forever !"

As the priest stood, eager to greet ignominy, and grateful for disgrace,—courting a martyrdom which God alone could recognize, and which man would be sure to regard with ridicule, or scorn,—a thought flashed through his brain which made redemption for himself appear an infamy.

While awaiting the curse of the coming servant, and the revolt of his dearest friend, his eyes fell upon the bed. The sight of that still unconscious beauty, reminded him that his humiliation would befoul her name, and blast the life which Providence might yet permit her to live upon this earth. This thought cut him to his spirit's core. Its agony awoke that comiseration for others which is the surest sign of oneness with God.

Just as Clarisse appeared in front of the chamber door, the priest's face was frightfully

distorted by the torture of an excruciating spiritual pang.

The sight of that face struck the superstitious servant to the floor.

Before the doctor could discover him, Bonnard sprang to the door, closed it with lightning velocity, and cried, out of the vast depths of his Christ-like heart :

“ No no !   Damnation first !   Damnation forever ! ”

The thought of the abandoned mother had converted the martyr into a man.

A precious, human affection—had balked a fiendish faith.

## CHAPTER IX.

## A SOUL FOR A SOUL.

EVERYTHING occurred so quickly, and with such an inexplicable mystery, that even the ready Lefort was at fault.

Trained rationalist as he was, for a moment his imagination got the better of his judgement.

He had only heard from Clarisse of her mistress ; now he realized the horrible truth. The husband was a maniac ; he had fatally injured his wife, and probably murdered the priest.

Yes, it was the sight of the monster, covered with the blood of his last victim, that had deprived the servant of her senses. All this was as clear to him as though he had been the witness of both crimes. He saw the insane

assassin, knife in hand, reeking with blood, and believed it was only a question of a few minutes—seconds perhaps—when the madman would appear and attack whomever he might see.

For his own safety he had no concern, for he felt that confidence in his own prowess which the intrepid always possess.

For the helpless creature on the floor he experienced the liveliest anxiety. He dared not desert her to secure assistance.

What should he do ?

He paused an instant in deep reflection, and then, with an impatient toss of the head which said, “there’s no use ! It must be done !” he raised and threw the servant, with the ease of an athlete, over his shoulder and started down the stairs, intending to bear his burden to the safety of the street.

He reached the hallway below and had his hand upon the knob of the front door, when a

voice said, in a tone of the most imperative authority :

“ Come back ! ”

Lefort flung open the door, standing with every nerve braced for flight, and asked :

“ Who calls ? ”

“ I ! Father Ambrose ! ” sternly replied the voice.

He did not recognize in the tense tones that reached him, the tender voice of the kindly man whose devotion to suffering had so completely conquered his materialistic aversion to the priest.

The experienced doctor, knowing the cunning of mania, believed the use of the priest’s name a ruse on the part of the maniac, to entice him into danger.

Withdrawing the key of the front door from the inside, he shouted loudly, so as to drown any sound his action might produce.

“ Very good. I will be with you in a moment.”

He was thrusting the key into the lock, preparatory to closing and fastening the door from the outside, when the voice cried out nearer and louder :

“ You must come at once ! there’s not an instant to lose ! ”

The physician looked up.

Upon a landing of the stairway stood the priest, in his long, impressive, black frock, with an air so terrible and commanding that it was difficult to recognize, in the majestic figure, the meek and lowly priest who had passed so long unnoticed by the world.

Lefort was astounded. All his suppositions were at fault. The mystery was more perplexing than ever. Gazing nonplussed at Bonnard, he exclaimed :

“ In the name of Heaven, what’s going on here ? ”

The clergyman coming down the stairway, said coldly :

"Rescue first. Explanation later."

Then, seeing the searching expression with which the doctor regarded him, he continued quickly, fixing his eyes on Clarisse :

"I will help you. We will lay her yonder," pointing, through a curtained archway into a room at one side.

Without another word, the two men bore the servant into a most inviting boudoir, and laid her upon a Turkish lounge.

"Is she hurt?" asked the priest anxiously.

No. It's a trivial case of syncope. Lay her head lower. There, like that. She'll recover presently of herself."

"Then follow quickly," said the Ecclesiastic, turning and striding up the stairs with impatient haste.

The doctor kept at the priest's heels, eager for a solution of the enigma that had tormented him so long.

He had been struck by the curate's countenance.

Something out of the ordinary must have happened to have produced so marked a change. An expression of inflexible hardness had taken the place of the gentle serenity, which he had always seen, even under the most trying circumstances, upon the pastor's patient face.

As they reached the side of the bed in the chamber above, Ambrose, pointing at the fair unconsciousness upon the pillow, moaned, with an unearthly emphasis: "The dead has been raised at the cost of a soul ! There's a soul to save though a life be lost!"

## CHAPTER X.

“ WHICH OF THE TWO ? ”

LEFORT glanced with quick intensity at Bonnard's face.

What he saw there piqued his curiosity and puzzled his impatient mind.

The priest was manifestly much disturbed ; far more indeed than was natural unless he had some personal stake at issue in this house, of which he never yet had hinted, even to him, his nearest friend.

However, Lefort never sought a confidence. Doubtless at the right moment the confiding man would tell him all. Meantime his immediate duty was to the half living girl, who, in some peculiar way, was the cause of the young curate's perturbations.

Satisfied with this explanation, the doctor turned to the task before him and commenced a close examination of what was to prove the most surprising case that had ever reached him during a long and varied career.

Very brief inquisition aroused the most intense interest in his scientific mind.

He saw that he had in hand the treatment of one of those anomalous attacks which break up the monotony of general practice, and open new fields in pathology to the most advanced student of medical art.

As the investigation proceeded the good man grunted, shook his head, pursed his lips, rubbed his forehead, stroked his chin, and every now and then muttered to himself:

“ Ha ! Yes ! Humph ! I see ! Of course ! The devil ! Incredible ! Is it possible ? ”

Tucking the clothes about the fair young creature, with a tenderness almost maternal, he exclaimed roughly :

"Lemaitre must come immediately."

Bonnard, fixing his eyes on the motionless form in the bed, inquired:

"Well?"

"It's an infernally queer case!" growled Lefort, with his ear at the patient's waist. The child's heart is actually stronger than the woman's, and the confounded little affair beats with a calm and regularity perfectly absurd, considering its parent's condition. Why, hang it! the mother's heart is almost silent, though her pulse is quite strong and fully 100. Her respiration, too, is ridiculously inconsistent with such a pulse. May I burst if its over eight."

All this was said with a sort of indignation, as though this irregularity of Nature were an outrage upon his beloved science.

The priest's eyes dilated as he learned the strength of the infant's heart. Looking earnestly at the experienced accoucher, he asked :

“ What’s your decision ?”

The curate longed to know what the doctor intended to do regarding those threatened lives. A horrible fear possessed him, and he wished to learn the worst at once.

The physician, supposing he meant to question him concerning the nature of the complaint, said:

“ It’s difficult to diagnose correctly. It looks like an acute case of puerperal hysteria.”

Then, forgetting good manners and the profession of his friend, he continued gruffly:

“ It’s a damned uncertain complaint. Capricious, whimsical, irritating ! No telling which way it will turn.”

Putting his hand quickly to his breast pocket he drew out a pad of paper, saying:

“ I must have assistance. You must go for Lemaitre.”

Father Ambrose, by a manifest effort, withdrew his eyes from the patient’s face and

gazed steadfastly out of the window. The doctor hastily scribbled the following note:

MY DEAR JACQUES: Come instantly with Amelie. We shall need her skillful aid. I have a very complicated case of dystocia.

In the third drawer from the top of my surgical chest you will find the following instruments.

- 1 Braun's Trephine.
- 1 Braun's Cranioclast.
- 1 Breisky's Cephalotribe.
- 1 Tarnier's Basiotribe.
- 1 Vectice.
- 1 Crotchet, and also my Axis Traction Forceps [Tarnier's], the longest one.

We may possibly save both mother and child, but will be lucky if either lives.

We must be prepared for either embryotomy or the Ceasarian section. I have all the knives necessary for the last operation with me.

In the closet of my desk you will find a caoutchouc diaphragm, as well as dam and apron.

Bring a speculum and all the anti-septics, especially the Bi-chloride Solution.

We shall need many sponges and these drugs:

- Chloroform.
- Ether.
- Nitrate of amyl.
- Brandy

I have all the rest we are likely to require.

The case is a desperate one, and whatever operation the relatives may decide upon it is sure to be a long and dangerous one.

Forget nothing—and hurry—hurry—hurry!

LEFORT.

By the way, you'll find a Tarnier's cervical dilator on the shelf in the dispensary. Amelie will know where to find the rubber sheet.

As he completed the writing of these directions, the physician held it toward his companion, commanding him as though he were his servant:

“Here! Be off with this to Jacques!”

The priest rose with dignity, and, pointing into the street, said:

“Your cab is at the door. Your coachman can take your message.” Then, in a tone of invincible conviction; “I must not leave her.”

Lefort glanced searchingly at that sad, set, face then, he started for the door—grumbling:

“Yes, quite right. Robert will do as well.”

Speeding down the stairs, he hurried out of the house to the garden gate, shouting imperatively to the coachman as he handed him the note:

“To Monsieur Lemaitre! Like lightening! Tell Mademoiselle Amelie to come prepared for the worst, and hurry back with both of them.”

Robert, seizing the paper, sprang upon the seat of his cab, crying :

“Very well, Monsieur !” and started his horse on a wild run.

“That’s right !” howled the doctor, after him—“drive for your very life !”

The cab tore round the corner. The surgeon re-entered the house.

He found Clarisse, leaning against the side of the curtained archway, watching him with distended eyes and a blanched face.

His absorption, in a far more pressing attack than hers, had led the medical practitioner to forget the servant. She had recovered, as he knew she would, without extraneous help, but he saw that she was unnerved, and weak, from fear. Her aid was important. He must brace her up and awaken her energies in the interest of her mistress.

She was a woman—therefore she had a heart.

She was a female—therefore fond of flattery.

An appeal to vanity and affection often converts the most timid and stupid of women into a heroine!

He would perform this wonder with Clarisse.

He began the process in a way that was not long in producing results.

"Ha! My good women," he cried, cheerily, "thank Heaven! you're all right at last. Now I have you to help me, I fear nothing."

"But Monsieur——"

"There, there! I know what you're going to say! You're ignorant; you don't know how to help; and yet I'll warrant you're a little lionness, and full of brains."

"Oh Monsieur!"

The dulcet dose was already doing its bracing work.

"No protests! I see a strong, brave, heart looking through those great, big, beautiful eyes of yours. I'd stake my life, that you love your mistress."

"Oh indeed I do!" exclaimed Clarisse, advancing—earnestly. "Is she alive? Can she be saved?" cried the now energetic girl.

"Bravo! I was right. You are a kind, courageous soul, and will wake up and work like a slave to save a life."

"Oh! for that, yes! Wear my fingers off, anything!"

This was said with such genuine enthusiasm that the doctor was delighted.

"God bless you, child! The life of your mistress is trembling in the balance. With all my skill, I can do nothing without you. May I count on you?"

The girl clasped his hand violently in both of hers, and exclaimed passionately:

"Yes—to the last breath in my body!"

The marvel was achieved; the apparently dull and timorous girl, had become an alert, intelligent, determined woman, ready for the most heroic deeds.

The doctor, exultant, cried :

“ Follow me ! We will save her now, sure ! ”

He was half way up the stairs, when his progress was again arrested by the capricious weakening of Clarisse.

“ One moment, Monsieur ! ” cried the girl stopping resolutely, with her hand on the newel-post of the bannisters. “ I can not, dare not go up there ! ”

“ Of what are you afraid ? ”

The woman blurted out :

“ Of that devil ! ”

“ What devil ? ”

“ The horrible naked monster I saw in Madaine’s room, just now.”

Moments were too precious to be wasted in reasoning with such superstitious folly. He must use heroic measures; crush, not coax her fears. With this conviction the physician stared at Clarisse, with penetrating sternness in his eyes.

"Look you, young woman ! I'm not to be trifled with. There is no devil here, only an angel at the point of death, whom you promised to help keep on earth. This nonsense must end. Are you the brave heart I believed you, or only a poor, puling fool, who is terrified at some silly bugaboo born of her own brain ?"

This speech accomplished its purpose. The girl, with a sudden impatient twist of her body, started up the stairway, saying :

"Go on, Monsieur. I've been an idiot ! Hereafter I'll try to be of use."

"Good !" cried Lefort, bounding up the steps like a boy, " now to work ! "

They hurried into " Madame's room."

The priest was seated near the bed, with his elbows on his knees, supporting his face in his hands. As the doctor returned, he lifted his head. Clarisse fell back a step with a half suppressed, involuntary cry, looking at Am-

brose, who rose with the blush of a maiden on his cheeks, and walked to the window. The physician's quick eye saw this mutual embarrassment, but impatient at anything causing more delay, he said angrily, to the servant :

“ What now ? ”

“ Nothing, Monsieur. What am I to do ? ” nervously questioned the girl.

“ Find a night dress for Madame, take it to the kitchen, heat it as hot as possible, wrap it in a blanket, and return fast as you can.”

Clarisso flew to the closet, caught a garment from a hook, and hurried from the room. As her steps were heard upon the stairs, the curate greeted the doctor with an appealing cry :

“ In the name of pity end this atrocious suspense ! Tell me what is to be done ! ”

“ It is not for me to decide.”

“ Who then ? ”

“ The husband.”

“ She has none.”

Lefort turned quickly.

Bonnard, horrified at this inadvertant betrayal of the truth, flushed, and stammered :

“ I mean that—that—he’s not here.”

“ Where is he ? ”

“ I don’t know.”

“ Can we reach him ? ”

“ Not at present.”

The physician, growing pale, asked anxiously :

“ And the other relatives ? ”

The priest bowed his head, murmuring :

“ I have reason to believe that none are near.”

“ Great God ! Must I decide then ? ” shouted the doctor, scowling at his patient.

“ I don’t understand,” muttered the priest, aghast with a painful suspicion.

The surgeon pointed at the bed and said in a hoarse voice :

“ Those two lives yonder are at stake. I

can save but one. It is for the husband to decide which shall be sacrificed. He cannot be consulted. Delay is death to both. Do you understand now ? ”

The curate wrung his hands with a pathetic misery, the extremity of which incomprehensible to the worried witness of the scene. Suddenly, Ambrose threw up his arms; fell on his knees at the side of the bed, and cried aloud in agony :

“ Merciful Christ ! Which of these precious lives can our weak hearts condemn ? ”

## CHAPTER XI.

" HOW EVIDENCE CAN LIE."

AMBROSE, broken and exhausted by the storm of emotion which had swept through his ardent being for so long, buried his face in the clothes of the young girl, and sobbed with the uncontrollable passion of a child. That divine paroxysm of the spirit which he suffered at the possibility of eternal pain to either of these living ones, with whom he had just passed through such a strange and binding experience, can only be fully understood by a heart in rapport with the boundless compassion which cried to God from Calvary : " Father forgive them for they know not what they do ! "

Even the doctor, benevolent and brainy as he was, mistook the misery of the priest,—which was really due to the vast power and

capacity of his love,—for the weakness of madness, or of a secret sin. He was terribly right. He was fearfully wrong! Here, indeed was madness ; here indeed was sin. But the able physician with all his science, was incapable of diagnosing the real nature of these calamities in their connection with the exceptional man whose prostration perplexed him so much. The madness of the honest Ambrose was of that crushing kind which must, inevitably, be developed when a great, humane, heart believes, with absolute faith, in the diabolical doctrine of eternal hell.

What did Lefort, the shrewd son of science, the brilliant student of human nature, see in the actions of Ambrose ?

This intellectual man of the world saw, in what was really the result of the divinest inner life, only the proof that Bonnard was that most depraved of spiritual monsters—a hypocrite. To him the priest's sobs were simply

an unrestrained expression of regret at the prospect of a personal loss.

This marvelously lovely girl had been the victim of the recreant ecclesiastic's passion; this doomed child, as yet unborn, was the offspring of the sworn celibate's secret sin; of the pharisaical pietist's hidden sensuality. To the scientist the saint had suddenly become the meanest of sinners. With a sagacity highly gratifying to his own amour propre, this wise master of the science of man recalled, and placed in a most denouncing order, all the evidence which his quick observation had collected of the truth of his conclusion.

This evidence took the following form: First—the fact that he had been summoned by Bonnard himself; the wild cries that greeted him as he entered the house; the peculiar secretiveness and hesitation of Clarisse; her sudden senselessness; the sharp, angry, slam of the chamber door, which could only have been

made by Ambrose, who, evidently taken by surprise feared the detection of the truth ; the complete change in the priest's expression ; his air of authority in this house ; his prompt declaration that this mother was not a wife, and his instant stammering attempt to recall this admission. Then there was his embarrassment before the servant ; her suspicious allusions to "the naked monster in Madame's room," and finally the man's overwhelming and mysterious agony.

Yes—it was as clear as the sun upon a cloudless day. There was but one explanation of this extraordinary series of suspicious signs.

The young mother was the curate's mistress.

The servant had discovered his shameful secret, and he had still enough of decency to blush in her presence.

The sweet face of this girlish maternity, on which nature had placed the seal of so singular a purity, had been polluted by the caresses of

a paramour, who was an apostate to his holiest vows. Lefort saw, reasoned and believed, this damnable hideous untruth.

Such is the facility with which the cleverest minds, and oftentimes the kindest hearts, can arrive at the most false and fearful convictions, from "trifles light as air."

Such is the power of appearances.

Such is the value of mere circumstantial condemnation.

No wonder slanders succeed so safely and so well; no wonder innocence is crushed so often and with such ease; no wonder real criminals escape, while the guiltless pine in prison, or are coolly murdered by the law!

Let those who are too ready to believe the worst of their fellow men, remember—how evidence can lie.

## CHAPTER XII.

## THE DOCTOR'S DECISION.

THE doctor's horrible suspicions took shape and sequence in one-tenth of the time it takes to state them. The first effect of his deceptive conclusion was to arouse a storm of indignant scorn; this soon passed off, however, as he witnessed the depth of the priest's despair. "Nature is stronger than creeds. Passion more potent than piety. These priests are but men, after all, and only the more to be pitied that natural joys are denied them by the corrupting conventions of clerical life." Thus musing he opened his medicine case, obtained from it a powerful preparation of Ignatia, and proceeded to mix it with water in a glass.

The afflicted victim of superstition arose,

His pent up tide of anguish had broken loose and poured out its seething force in tears. What new tests of his faith and fortitude were coming he neither knew nor cared. He believed himself resigned to bear any further pang that providence might permit. He was soon to realize how far astray his calculations of his own endurance were.

Lefort, abruptly jarring with his heavy hand the now listless father, extended a glass before him, and said, brutally: "Drink that!"

Bonnard's lids quivered, then his cleared eyes sought those of his companion in pathetic surprise. He was vaguely conscious of some antagonism which he could not explain.

Lefort, scowling, averted his face.

Ambrose drank in silence, with the meek docility of a child who scornfully repents some unintentional offense to a friend. When he had drained the glass, he handed it back, glancing appealingly at his old comrade, who

unceremoniously snatched the goblet and passed at once to a dressing room, the door of which stood half open between the window and the bed. It seemed to the sore conscience of the ascetic, as though the doctor in some mysterious way, had learned of his pardonless sin. Feeling the lassitude of a hopeless resignation, he leaned against the wall at the head of the bed, and turned, with the dumb instinct of some friendless brute, toward the one face in this wide world where he felt sure he should find no sign or shadow of reproach. An almost intimate fellowship seemed in some subtle way to be growing between the deserted and himself.

Both of them were doomed; she to death; he to damnation.

As he looked at this mate of his misery, a healthier tint appeared upon her cheeks. His heart leapt with a wild delight. She was growing stronger! Might not the doctor be wrong? Why should not both be saved?

Trembling with joy, he was bending closer to assure himself of her increasing strength, when Clarisse, hurrying into the room, stopped short with a gasp of disgust. He looked up. A sickening shame invaded him at the sight of the sneering maid. Humiliation succeeded the spasm of happiness, which for one fleet flash of time he was permitted to enjoy.

The priest's eyes fell before the peasant's.

A moment's silence ensued, during which the man's natural dignity reasserted itself in the face of this female's fine contempt. He was a sinner—with an eternal stain upon his soul. What then? God, not man, should condemn. He would gladly have welcomed the bitterest scorn to wipe his sin away, but now, since that was impossible without besmearing the precious innocence of others, he revolted at the insolence of this peasant who presumed to be his judge. These thoughts bred rebellion in the breast of this self-abasing man.

Looking straight into the eyes of the contemptuous creature before him, his own gleaming with indignation, he said in tones of austere authority: "Woman to work! How dare you stare while she suffers?"

Clarisso, crushed by the commanding manner of the priest, cringed instantly, and said with tremulous meekness: "Pardon Monsieur. I am awaiting the doctor's commands."

These words recalled Ambrose's hope. Turning to the door of the dressing room he said excitedly: "Lefort! Doctor!"

Before Bonnard could say more, the physician appeared, dragging into the room a toilet stand which he had divested of all its paraphernalia, and interrupted the speaker by grumbling loudly: "Well, what now?"

"See! The color is growing in her face!"

"Good!" cried Lefort, placing the dressing stand in front of the window.

"Do you think she can be saved?" asked Ambrose, eagerly.

"*She shall be saved!*"

"Thank God! Thank God!" exclaimed the priest, lifting his tear-flooded eyes in an ecstacy of gratitude that both should live.

Had the faithful fanatic remarked the emphasis of the physician his cry of joy would have been checked. As it was, the doctor's assurance of the mother's salvation led him to place implicit confidence in the delivery and rescue of the child. Radiant, with the certainty that neither would be lost, he sank into a chair at the foot of the bed, every beat of his heart a benediction to the God who had deigned to heed his prayers.

The delight of the priest was but another confirmation to the doctor of his false conclusions, and illy prepared him to understand the struggle that was shortly to ensue between them.

As the surgeon turned from the table toward the bed, he saw that Clarisse was standing

upon the opposite side with a bundle in her hands and an expression of blank amazement upon her face.

The commingling of audacity and delight in the priest were too much for her limited capacity to comprehend. The perplexity however was quickly ended by the energetic directions of Lefort.

"Ha! Here at last!" he snarled. "Is the blanket still warm?"

"Yes Monsieur."

"And the night dress?"

"Is hot, also, Monsieur."

"Quick! the blanket around her waist, and the dress over her head!"

The hands of the doctor and the servant were speedily busy, clothing the girlish form in the bed.

While these two were at work Bonnard was lost in silent supplication of the saints, for assistance in this hour of supreme suspense.

A horse galloped rapidly to the gate.

The doctor ran to the window shouting cheerily, as though a dance instead of a dangerous operation was about to occur.

"They're here!"

Turning with animation to Clarisse, he continued:

"Now my good girl hurry! Let them in, and bring me two pails of boiling water as fast as you can."

The servant, exceedingly agitated as the sinister moment approached, flew from the room. Lefort commenced the final scrutiny which was to determine his decision. Amelie, the doctor's sister and most skillful assistant, now hastily entered. She was followed by Lemaitre, her brother's young apprentice, who carried in his hands a heavy and terrible-looking bag.

"Well, Earnest?" murmured Amelie, quietly, leaning across the bed.

Earnest, completing his examination, placed his ear to the patient's chest.

"Heart action somewhat stronger. Pulse about a hundred and eight. Respiration, now, about fifteen. Temperature abnormally low."

"What are the chances?"

"Possibly one in three."

"For both?"

"No, for one only."

"What have her relatives decided?"

"There are none of her relatives here. I am forced to decide between them myself."

"And your decision is——"

"Embryotomy," said the physician, raising his head with a white, stern face.

## CHAPTER XIII.

## THE STRUGGLE.

WHILE Amelie was questioning her brother, the priest retired to a seat at the further end of the room near a window and watched vacantly, the fast setting sun. The doctor's decision to destroy the babe did not reach the ascetic's ears.

Lemaitre had hurried instinctively to the dressing stand, upon which he was placing the dreadful objects he took from the bag. At the word "embryotomy" he turned to his master and asked : "which process?"

"The indications demand basiotripsy," was the physician's firm reply.

Amelie had already opened the bed upon the further side, and was spreading the rubber

sheet. The apprentice raised the basiotribe, which looked liked some relic of the Inquisition, and unscrewing its terrible clamp, opening its crushing jaws, and unmasking its cruel perforator, he anointed it for the sacrifice with an antiseptic oil.

The surgeon drew from his medicine case a set of knives.

While all this was proceeding, the priest looked on scarcely conscious, until his attention was finally attracted by certain movements of the physicians which indicated that an operation was about to commence.

They hastily threw off their coats and vests.

Lefort stripped his scarf from his neck, unfastened his collar, and freed his brawny throat, rolling his shirts sleeves high up on his arms. He then took from the hands of Lemaitre a rubber apron, one loop of which he passed over his head, tying the centre about his waist.

The suggestion of the butchery so near at hand was revolting.

The priest realized that something fearful was pending. He advanced with a livid face, and said, looking in horror at the tools of torture upon the table : “are you going to use these?”

“Some of them.” Growled the preoccupied operator.

Ambrose shuddered, staggered slightly, and then steadied himself against a chair, faint and sick at heart.

Lemaitre assisted Amelie in placing the patient upon the rubber sheet.

Lefort went to their aid.

Clarisse entered with pails of boiling water. Amelie directed her to place them at the foot of the bed, and then whispered :

“Now, be quick ! a bowl !”

The servant slipped hurriedly into the dressing room; the surgeons placed their subject

in position; Clarisse reappeared with the bowl.

Amelie took the vessel from the servant's hands saying : " Lights ! It will soon be dark. Bring two of the largest lamps you have."

The servant sped noiselessly away.

Amelie filled the bowl half full of hot water. Her brother passed her a bottle and a pair of sponges. She poured a liquid from the vial into the bowl, stirring it with one of the sponges. She was preparing the antiseptic wash for the dangerous wounds they were about to inflict.

The agonizing moment was at hand.

An awful silence settled upon the scene.

Even the surgeons grew pale and breathed deeply, as their preparations neared an end.

The young priest, terrified, yet fascinated, stared helplessly at those horrible knives.

Instants were magnified into ages.

It was all like a grotesque dream.

Lefort handed something made of rubber to Lemaitre, saying :

"The dilator. Commence."

Lemaitre slipped the tool into the bowl, and—commenced.

The brother handed a little syringe to his sister and said, with quiet authority :

"Hold her pulse and stand ready to use the hyperdermic. At the first sign of weakening, inject the brandy."

Amelie grasped the patient's wrist, and stood with ghastly cheeks, pinched lips, and fixed eyes, looking at the subject, ready for the worst.

The senior surgeon, then said to his apprentice : "now, let's hurry ! I will use the instrument, you hold the body."

At this moment Clarisse returned with the lighted lamps, placed them on a stand near the bed, and leaned against the wall, agape with sickening expectations.

Lemaitre began the sponging process.

Lefort turned to the table and lifted the basiotribe.

Bonnard glided between the doctor and the bed, his hands clasped with pitiful intensity upon his chest, and whispered: "what are you going to do?"

"Commence the operation," replied the surgeon sternly.

"What operation?"

"Craniotomy. I am forced to adopt the basiotripsic process and crush the base of the infant's skull."

"What?" cried Ambrose, with a voice full of ringing resonance; "murder the child?"

"No!" shouted the doctor, indignant at the word "murder;" "I remove an embryo to save a mother."

The proportions of the priest became imposing. Trembling with righteous wrath, he struck his fist so forcibly upon the table that the cruel instruments leapt as though in fright, at the same time exclaiming :

"I forbid this operation!"

"By what right?" demanded Lefort with a suppressed scorn that was growing dangerous.

"By the right religion confers upon all her servants to save unbaptized babes from hell! By my sacred right as a father of our Holy Church!"

"Hypocrite!" stormed the surgeon; "confess the truth! You dare to interfere with the duty of a doctor only as the father of this child!"

Ambrose recoiled, thunderstruck.

The silent witnesses of the scene, started, and fixed their eyes upon the priest with riveted intentness.

The extremity of the situation quickened every faculty of the priest's mind. He became strangely cold and clairvoyant, without any loss of that quivering intensity which denoted the infinite depths of his resolve. His brain was flooded with illumination. With in-

conceivable rapidity, he divined the suspicion of the doctor regarding himself, and in his desperation determined to pursue the most audacious course. Suddenly advancing on the doctor with folded arms, he said, in a tone as tense as steel: "well then, as this infant's father, I command you to save its life!"

Lefort's muscles grew rigid with rage. Extending his arm to clear a passage to his patient, he struck Ambrose brutally upon the side, thundering: "the law accords no parent's right to any apostate priest!"

In a flash the physician was felled to the floor, while the outraged priest with blazing eyes, towered above him.

The meekness of the monk had fled. The blood of his sire boiled with a soldier's fury in the veins of the long-suffering saint.

A soul was at stake !

All the powers of Hell could not daunt him now !

Lefort sprang to his feet and flew like a maddened mastiff at the pastor's throat.

A doctor's natural rights had been invaded.

The valor of science matched that of superstition.

The fight of the fanatics began.

## CHAPTER XIV.

## THE SAINT BECOMES AN ASSASSIN.

As Lefort attacked Bonnard he was staggered by a fearful blow upon the shoulder.

But for the presence of mind and power of the priest, the doctor might have received dangerous, if not fatal wounds.

The hound, perplexed by the unusual proceedings about him, had lain in sullen silence beneath the bed. Roused by the sudden struggle between the men, he leapt to the assistance of the one with whom his brief association had established a tie, and sprang fiercely upon Lefort.

With almost instant speed, the left hand of the priest held the physician at arm's length, while his right caught the dog by

the collar and pulled him back upon his own breast, just in time to save the throat of his old friend from the fangs of the ferocious brute.

The witnesses of this scene stood paralyzed with amazement.

The awful creed of the ascetic, goading his noble heart into a frantic fear for the safety of the infant's soul, set free the subtlest forces of his nervous centres and gave him the tendons of a Titan.

Astonishment at the preternatural strength of the priest checked even the rage of the doctor. The absolute sincerity of the fanatic bestowed a dignity and grandeur upon his superstition which might well give science pause.

An unselfish enthusiast is the nearest kin of God.

As he stood gripping man and beast with hands of adamant, his eyes kindled with unearthly light, Ambrose Bonnard looked a son

of God indeed. Awe overwhelmed every other sentiment in those who witnessed his marvellous mien. The religionist was so possessed by one thought, so animated by one idea, that he was heedless of all else. The purpose which had prompted his every act, grew deeper as his trials increased. The rigidity of a dauntless determination pervaded his whole form, and when at last he broke the spell of silence, the fathomless intensity of his resolve, revealed by his voice, sent a chill through every heart. Still holding doctor and dog in fingers firm as flint, he said : "my will is God's will ! You—or I—shall instantly deliver this child !"

The same suspicion simultaneously thrilled each listener.

The priest was certainly insane. The idea of the desperate extremities to which his raving might arouse the fanatic, awakened the wildest imaginations in them all. None dared move

for fear of consequences impossible to foresee. Now all was explained that had so puzzled and misled the physician.

Realizing the uselessness of a struggle with a maniac, the doctor mastered his indignation, and asked, soothingly : “ what do you mean my good friend ? ”

“ I mean,” replied the priest, releasing his prisoners, stepping quickly to the table and seizing the sharpest tool he saw, “ that you must do as I dictate, or I will use the knife ; I will free the child ! ”

The hound, cowed by the priest’s gaze, slunk once more beneath the bed.

Clearly the madman would hesitate at nothing.

The thought of the mutilation of his patient by the unprofessional hand of the priest, was revolting to Lefort. Unable to restrain his abhorance, he exclaimed, appealingly :

“ Would you assassinate a mother ? ”

"Yes—if necessary to save a soul!"

The questions were reversed. It was the surgeon's turn to sue.

"But my dear father, you forget that in these cases, man holds the parent the more precious."

With a fervidness almost furious the zealot declared: "I forget everything except that God claims that child; that eternal existence outranks the temporal; that the fate of a soul is more vital than that of a body; that the earth life of the christened mother is the price of a heavenly life to her unchristened babe!"

"What's this?" cried Lefort; "you fear that God may doom the sinless unborn?"

"None can escape the deadly sin of Adam but those dedicated to God by baptism in the name of His only Son!"

This was proclaimed with an imperious positiveness that stung the ardent radical out of reason. With the rashness of rage he burst into a torrent of intemperate speech.

"To hell with your creed ! I'm a brute, but better than it ! I save more gladly than it, and no thought of such heartless tyranny shall balk my duty now ! I will rescue this fair young mother, and chance the fate of her child with the priestless power that rules the stars !"

"Infidel ! I forbid you to chance the fate of a soul !"

"I defy your forbiddance ! At the bed of birth the surgeon is a sovereign ! The heart of man decrees it, and the law of the land declares it !"

"At the bed of death—God—and his priest—are supreme !—By the rights of my sacred office, I claim a soul for Christ !"

By the rights of my lawful office, I claim a mother for men !"

The life-saver, and the soul-saver, had unconsciously become Paladins in that hostility which endures forever between a faith born of

fear for God, and that begotten of love for man. Both were bigots, but well matched. Their breasts held hearts of equal zeal; equal in vigor of conviction, in depth of determination, in scorn of consequences, in unquenchable courage. Both were heroes of the noblest mould. One mystic—one material; one dedicated to the ideal, the other devoted to the real; ready to destroy one another in order to serve the Humanity which both adored. There in that half-lighted room, they loomed like two Colossii, face to face, regardless of results, each determined to enforce the decree of his own creed.

The sense of impending disaster weighed so heavily upon the spectators of this struggle that they stood rooted with horror, their faculties refusing to respond to the demands of the moment.

The physician knew the desperate nature of religious mania and realized that to save this mother he must imperil his own life.

How defend himself without killing the priest? The madman was armed with a weapon sharpened in mercy to the patient, but all the more dangerous in the hands of rabid recklessness.

The tension of the instant was torture. Each felt the inflexible force of the other's will. Each eyed the other with the proud energy of an angry eagle.

The theist spoke first, asking hoarsely : “do you refuse to save the child?”

“I do,” replied the atheist, emphatically.

The fanatic tightened his hold on the knife, advancing as he muttered :

“The doctor fails! The priest must suffice!”

The surgeon interposed.

“My friend,” he said, in iron tones, “this young woman is my charge. You shall go no further.”

“So! You defy the will of heaven?”

cried the sacrificant, and rushing with uplifted knife at the scoffer of sacraments, he shouted in frantic exultation : “then in Christ’s name ! —for a soul’s sake ! ”

Superstition had converted the saint into an assassin. His hand fell with lightening velocity, straight for the doctor’s heart.

The next instant Ambrose was gasping for breath. In another moment he lay unconscious upon the floor.

The struggle had ended, but neither science, nor superstition had triumphed. Both were destined to be crushingly rebuked by Nature, which protesting nothing evolves all, and ultimately achieves on earth a victory for that Eternal Law of Love—whose rule infallibly secures an Infinite Liberty of Life.

END OF BOOK I.

## BOOK II.

## THE TRIUMPH.

## CHAPTER I.

## SUB SILENTIO.

"HE's quiet now. Roll up the end of the rug. Here, under his head. So. Leave the cloth across his chin."

Thus the surgeon directed his sister, as he and Lemaitre bent over the prostrate form of the priest.

Just before Bonnard attacked Lefort, the latter had discovered a possible escape from the impending catastrophe. Something he saw upon the table behind the insane ascetic, might

save them both if reached in time. Holding the fanatic with his eye, he succeeded, by a furtive movement of his finger, in directing the attention of his semi-paralyzed apprentice to the object from which he hoped so much. Fortunately the student understood, and, with stealthy quietness crept, unseen by Ambrose, close to the stand of instruments at his back.

A few seconds later the priest made his mad lunge at the doctor's heart.

The physician swiftly dodged the deadly blow, and, with the inordinate strength of a desperate fear, caught the curate about the neck, seizing his weapon hand and drawing it down upon his hip. At the same instant Lemaitre grasped the fighting fanatic upon the other side clapping a chloroformed cloth upon his mouth. The struggle at first was fearful ; the drug, alone, enabling the two strong men, with the energetic assistance of Amelie, to conquer the convulsed enthusiast.

In the turmoil Amelie's dress was torn from her breast, and her hair shaken about her shoulders. In turning aside to replace her dishevelled attire she was shocked at the change in the appearance of the patient. With a cry of dismay she flew to her side, screaming ; "Earnest ! Earnest ! be quick ! she's dying !

Lefort and his assistant rushed to the bed. The physician, feeling the fast stiffening form, shouted to his sister ; "hurry with the hypodermic !" then to Lemaitre ; "the nitrate of amyl ! quick !"

While Amelie injected the brandy, her brother held the amyl to the nostrils of the sinking sufferer. Amelie in her haste, punctured the flesh of the young girl very deeply and was surprised that so severe a cut brought no blood.

"Earnest, see !" she cried, "what can this mean ?"

"The physician, snatching the syringe from

his sister's hand, made a lacerating gash in the patient's arm. The broken skin curled together like the leaf of a sensitive plant, but the wound was bloodless. Lefort, observing this, said, in worried tones : "it may be only the cutaneous ischæmia which so often attends hystero-cateleptic attacks, but I fear it's something worse."

Noticing that the amyl produced no effect upon the mucus membrane of the nose, he placed his ear to the woman's body. Presently he lifted his head, and growled : "the heart is inaudible. Respiration has ceased. The reflexes are absent. The amyl is useless and even the knee jerk fails. We must know the worst at once. Quick ! Jacques, the battery ! "

In less than a minute they applied a strong faradic current with metallic electrodes to the patient's head. Not a sign of life was left. Lefort withdrew the poles of the battery, saying : "she's dead ! "

"And the child?" questioned Amelie.

"Has but one chance of life."

Hastening to the table with the battery, the surgeon commanded: "Jacques! put the diaphram in place. We must make the cæsarian cut.

\* \* \* \* \*

While selecting the knives for his dangerous work the surgeon's indignation at the loss of the mother, burst forth in bitter speech: "law and humanity are baffled! nature sides with superstition;"

To these words a whispered reply startled the ears of each.

*"Nature sides not and slights not."*

Each turned and looked at the other. There was awe on every face.

"Did you hear that?" asked Amelie nervously.

"Hear what?" questioned her doubting brother.

"The whisper?"

"I heard it!" said Lemaitre, with bated breath.

They instinctively looked at the priest. He remained unmoved upon the floor.

"Oh! Earnest I'm frightened!" murmured Amelie, shrinking close to her brother's side.

Again that mystic whisper startled their long tried nerves.

*"Fear not, the triumph of love is at hand."*

Chilled by a common suspicion they glanced at the form in the bed. As their eyes fell upon its peaceful face the lights rose with a lurid glare, and then in a flash went out.

Clarissh shrieked and fled from the room.

Amelie shivered and sank upon her knees.

Lemaitre clung to a post of the bed, trembling, and unmanned. Even the heart of the sturdy Lefort quivered with nervous dread. All at once, just over the bed, in the midst of the darkness, appeared a point of violet light.

Each eye was instantly fixed and fastened by some resistless fascination, upon the dazzling, motionless mote. Their minds were dazed by the strain of their intentness. Spiral vortices of luminous ether seemed to form within their brains, converging in cone-like whirls, upon that common, focal point.

Slowly, calmly, irresistibly, that focus sucked into its endless centre the whole of their consciousness.

The last they ever remembered was the maze of those luminous whirls.

## CHAPTER II.

## THE AWAKENING.

EARNEST LEFORT was the first to emerge from the occult condition into which they had all been so subtly inducted, before any of them could realize into what vast void they were drifting. When he returned to consciousness, he found himself seated at a table in the centre of the room with a paper in his hand, which was strongly lighted by the lamp which stood near his shoulder on the stand. Abrupt as the recurrence of cognition was, it appeared perfectly natural for him to find himself in this position.

His primary mental state as he regained his physical sense, was almost infantile in its docile and unquestioning acceptance of the un-

accountable conditions about him. Nothing in the entire succession of exotic events, was more extraordinary than his first waking mood. While his strong mind was exceptionally clear his powerful will remained in singular abeyance. With unhesitating rapidity he perceived all that he was to do, and just how it should be done, but it never for an instant occurred to him to discuss the why of, or refuse obedience to the influence of the instant.

Sight preceded the other senses in the re-opening of terrestrial cognizance. He saw before all else these words, written in a large clear hand upon the paper he was holding.

*"Read. Obey, and you will understand."*

Without a particle of excitement he opened the manuscript and read the following :

To one most beloved—greeting and congratulations : From grief that kills, is born joy that lives forever. The most precious hour that has

thus far unfolded in this most wondrous of earthly ages, is now.

One nears birth who is destined to tear the scales from the fear-fettered eyes of superstition, and to inspire a deeper faith, a more zealous energy, and a purer life, for all time to come.

Let your hearts swell with grateful pride! for to you is given the precious privilege of watching over and guarding the physical welfare of the New Word.

The story of these marvelous moments shall be recorded that you may the more surely believe in the deathless glory to come.

Whilst you and Jacques are busy, the hand of Amelie writes these lines.

Know then these fundamental facts: The child born this night is the fruit of a maiden's virgin desire, and of a man's virgin love.

In the female, passion most potent sprang with frank and joyous spontaneity from affection most profound.

In the male, affection, stronger than his own rebellious will, grew out of passion the most imperious and rude.

In the mother, centuries of loving service have culminated in a hypersensitive unselfishness.

In the father, centuries of inherited power, ages of domination over others, have evolved the most complete, consistent, uncompromising egoism.

The race conditions for the advent of an illuminating life, have been unique. The extremity of the oppositions have been infinite. The unity of these oppositions was wrought from the impulse of a resistless affection, energized by the most virile passion, and has evolved an organization of the richest resources, as well as of the most harmonic order. The last perfecting touch to this temperament, has been given by the shock of the most tragic shame. In time you will understand the consummating power of this penetrating pang.

An archangelic essence has been called to give the aid of his rare nature to the completion of this vital work. This essence has taken the form of the fanatic, whose zeal for the eternal life of another, would not hesitate to sacrifice the now of all the world, or the forever of himself. Between this victim of sacredotal doctrine and the child-mother, who is the untrammeled product of true

love and free thought, there is a close psychic affinity, which renders his pneuma vitalizing, vivifying, and restorative, to her stricken cosmic organization.

This explains the rash innocence of his first impulse, and the close physical contact which you are about to renew between them.

You and your apprentice are stripping the unconscious priest.

Now you replace him at her side.

You have believed this young woman dead. You were mistaken. The same error has led science to send thousands who were in the final stage of carus, to the horrible death of the grave. Decomposition alone, is the sure sign that life may not return. There is a trance whose vice-like grasp holds the inmost molecular centres of life beyond the reach of the most incisive vibration which can possibly emanate from any galvanic battery which science has discovered. The coming one will give the world a unity of atoms, from whose substantial interchanges will flow the most awful and most potent of all motive agencies. This discovery will infallibly detect

and resurrect the life substance of the natural world in all tissues; whose organic integrity is not absolutely lost. The anima, which this invention will soon enable science to command, is working at this instant and radiating from the harmonial communion of atom in the bodies of Ambrose and his celestial comrade Constance, who lies at his side.

*Ten minutes have elapsed!*

The first rythms of the real, are now reaching and reviving the activity of the intra-astral ethers, in the interstitial, neural recesses of the medulla.

The impact of the primitive impulse is now exquisitely adjusted to the vital centres of her organization.

The involution of the death tendency is reversed.

The evolution of the life form re-begins.

The procession of the microcosmic vortices, in the cerebral tissues, once more proceeds.

*Seventeen minutes have passed!*

The tremors commence.

The life throe convulses.

The spasm is complete.

Again she breathes.

You do your work splendidly. All the learning and skill stored in the gray molecules of your brain are of immense service to us now—you have accomplished a superb reversion—you may rest and wait—nature will work her own way, without danger to mother or child.

In less than thirty fleet minutes the beginning of the end is at hand.

The celestial spheres are pulsating with supernal songs.

Again the absolute completes a new aspiration in the relative.

Let all the world-forsaken, love-lost, lie-locked, of the earth, rejoice with boundless joy !

Let torrents of blessed tears wash away, forever, all the foulness and falseness of the unloving life !

The eternal mother is with you !

*The redeeming daughter comes ! "*

\*     \*     \*     \*     \*

Here the first communication, which was evidently written by the reader's sister, ended.

A coo of delight reached the doctor's ears.

He looked up.

Amelie stood before him, holding a naked female infant, on which she fixed eyes as glassy and mechanical as those of some monstrous manakin.

## CHAPTER III.

## STEVNA.

THE new-born's eyes were wide open, and gazed with a sort of happy wonder, into the dimly lighted spaces before her. The exquisite little lips were half parted by a smile, and beneath her rosy wee fists, which were held close upon her breast, Lefort saw with astonishment, another manuscript directed to himself.

The sound of the child's voice roused his aural sense, and with its reopening, the apprehension of the amazing character of this whole experience rapidly increased.

Anxiety now attended his observation of his sister's strange expression, and the surprise of the child's sudden appearance brought him a

partial recognition of the curious mental condition in which he, himself, still remained.

A vague uneasiness stole through him.

The unchanged mechanical attention of Amelie to the child, worried him. He turned to her for explanation and called her by her name. She remained unmoved, but the sound of his own voice suddenly restored his faculties to their normal activity.

With a long drawn sigh he awoke to a full consciousness of the extraordinary state of affairs about him. He felt as though he had just issued from the despotic delusion of some absurd dream. The unusual nature of the circumstances in which he found himself became completely apparent, and what a moment before appeared perfectly natural, became unnatural, to a degree that was positively painful. So long as he was to any extent an actor in this preternatural play of incidents, he remained unperceptive of their abnormality ; but

his call to Amelie had separated him from all personal association with the peculiar state of the others, and changed the nature of his relation to his surroundings from that of participant, to that of spectator. The moment this reversal was effected, all the old time energy of mind and positiveness of will returned to him. He began to regard his environment with keen and inquisitive glances.

What he saw shocked his understanding, and for a time led him to believe that he was the victim of a visionary condition, which could only have been produced by the use of some strong drug. With a supreme effort of his will he sought to shake himself free from the fetters of this phantasm, but the more violent his effort to escape its sway, the more absolute became the rule of its reality, till at last, his reason was forced to accept what his senses so incessantly reaffirmed, and he was obliged to acknowledge that he stood in the presence of

events whose actuality was as positive, as their character was unique.

Reiterated utterance of Amelie's name failed to release her from the clutches of the unaccountable diathesis into which she had fallen.

He looked for Lemaitre, hoping to secure from him aid, or some solution of these tormenting absurdities.

As he turned toward the bed the sight that met his eye was bewildering.

The young woman whom he had pronounced dead, lay there, alive, breathing, and with the flush of fever upon her face. Close to her bare body reposed, what appeared to be the naked corpse of the priest. The clothes were frankly thrown from both forms, and Jacques, with great alertness, was bathing the young mother with alcohol, the fumes of which Lefort now perceived were filling the room.

Hurrying to the side of his apprentice he cried :

"Jacques ! what does this mean ?"

Lemaitre proved as irresponsible as Amelie, and continued his occupation without the slightest attention to the surgeon's energetic appeals.

The distracted man became convinced that his own brains were imposing upon him. He resolved to end, instantly, the preposterous illusions that mocked his common sense. He seized his hands and wrung their joints with a fierceness that strained their tendons and goaded him into groans of pain. He struck his forehead violently, beside himself at the pranks which his senses seemed to be playing upon his wits. The more thoroughly, however, he tested the normality of his own consciousness, the more he perceived its unimpeachable completeness.

Grasping his assistant by the shoulder, he exclaimed, furiously : "Jacques ! I command you to reply !" With a quick movement of

his arm the fragile Lemaître flung the stalwart Lefort, with stunning force, against the wall. This experience capped the climax of his astonishment. To longer question the genuineness of these incredible facts, was more irrational, even, than the facts themselves. Convinced at last of their reality, a desperate desire to master their meaning, supplanted his rebellion at their existence. Stealing cautiously to the side of the bed, opposite to that where the student still labored, he earnestly watched the man at his work. He saw that the whole person of his apprentice, was under the direction of some influence entirely distinct from the individuality of the man himself. His body had become a mere machine, which was played through, and permeated by the intelligence that determined his actions. The same glassiness of stare in the eyes, and the same emotionless mechanicality of motion characterized Jacques that he had observed in

Amelie. He leaned across the body of the priest beneath him, and looked with the most searching scrutiny into Lemaitre's eyes.

The young man paused in his work, and lifted his eyes as though impelled to do so in order to give Lefort an opportunity of making the most searching investigation of the optical conditions.

The scientist saw that the pupils were dilated to their fullest extent; that the longitudinal axis of the eyeballs converged slightly inward, each eye tending, in a minute degree, to turn from the other, like the eyes of a man who is the opposite of cross-eyed.

Presently, Jacques, moved by a new impulse, drew the coverings over the naked bodies in the bed, walked to the side of his superior, and extended his arm, with a movement that invited the physician to feel his pulse. A cursory examination of the vascular conditions of the man showed a pulse that was extremely

slow but of ordinary strength ; while respiration was scarcely perceptible, the skin being clammy, and the temperature strangely low. Turning from his pupil to look after his sister, the doctor saw that she was still standing by the table with the infant in her arms, precisely as he had left her a few minutes before. Crossing to her, he noticed that the cherub had fallen into a peaceful sleep. His attention was this time attracted, with more emphasis than before, to the manuscript which lay beneath the hands of the little one. Quickly disengaging the pages from the embrace of the babe, he observed that it was addressed to himself, *in his own hand*.

Irritated by this new evidence of the subordination of his own individuality to the control of some other will, he opened the package with impatience.

These words met his eye :

"Do not rebel at what you cannot yet comprehend, for you will rejoice with exceeding gladness when all is explained.

Each of you have been inducted into that subtle Psycho-cosmic schesis which we term, En; a state of profound zootic subjection, which renders somatic organisms susceptible to the potent empire of what is called, in the terrestro-astral plane, substantial imitation ; a class of occult effectuants which your friend Charcot, who is at last, interested in the psychological phenomena attending hysterical-neuroses, would probably describe as a species of automatic, or spontaneous subjective hypnotism.

You will find in the manuscripts attached to this communication, a full explanation of the causes, methods and consequences of the experiences through which we have been passing to-day. These you will read at your leisure, after this night's work is complete, and you have had sufficient rest from the excitements you have undergone to restore your mental poise.

The resuscitation of the mother, has been effected through the media supplied by the exceptional organization of Father Ambrose. To accomplish our purpose with the greatest speed and

most certain success, it has been necessary to establish a close contact between their bodies.

To us, who have escaped the scortatory imaginings of terrestrial consciousness, this contact is supremely pure and beneficent. Your eyes would not be permitted to witness it, unless we knew that to your clean manhood it would appear equally free from guile.

Before entirely completing our work, we have restored your sensorial system to its accustomed relation to your own entity, in order that you might make, for the benefit of science and the confirmation of the life to come, the most exact pathological examination of each of the individuals now under occult influence.

We earnestly desire that you should do this with the utmost thoroughness, and as exhaustively as your present knowledge of nature permits. The more merciless your scrutiny the more clear the lack of all physiological disturbance will become ; and, thus, the more positive the evidence that they are in no respect diseased or de-naturalized. Proof of this may help to convince you that the puzzling phenomena, attending these indescribable hours, however unusual, are not in the least unnatural. Before you can properly com-

mence the investigations requested, it will be necessary for you to obey the following directions :

You will first take Amelie by the hand and lead her to the side of the priest. You will place Jacques next to her. You will put Amelie's left hand into Lemaitre's right. You will join his left hand to the right hand of the priest. You will then take the left hand of the priest in your right and hold Amelie's right hand with your left.

When you have accomplished these conjunc-  
tions, we will transmit to you, through Ambrose,  
the authority which we now possess over the  
organic mechanisms of your sister and apprentice.  
You will know when the transmission is com-  
plete by a sharp pain which will shoot through  
your right shoulder. From that time you will  
find each subject entirely surrendered to your  
control.

After obtaining this power you will perceive that their cerebral, visceral, and vascular systems, will be as responsive to any suggestion you may make to them, through the organs of sense, as the stops of a musical instrument to the touch of the most expert musician.

By means of this command you will discover a very large and unsuspected number of faculties, which are latent in the human organism ; and

while experimenting, you will be astounded at the extravagant amount of force which the molecular activity of the body can discharge, with a very long continued waste, while under the dominion of your submonitions.

By making minute notes of the results of your present rare experiences, you will be enabled, eventually, to arrive at developments of the greatest consequence to science and philosophy.

When your investigations are completed, you will conduct Amelie to a room across the hall and release her from your influence by simply commanding her to pass into a normal sleep. Thereupon she will retire and awaken, refreshed and well, toward noon to-morrow.

You will lead Lemaitre to the lounge in the boudoir below, and release him in the same manner as that in which you freed Amelie.

When you have ended your occult mastery of these two, you will return and take charge of the young mother who is now undergoing a healing treatment from us through father Ambrose.

You will find the priest as thoroughly at your disposal as the others will have become, when you have followed the directions herein given, and your experiments with him will result in

revelations of a character so radical as to shock even your emancipated mind.

After bathing the patient with the alcohol and water which Jacques has been using, you will apply the compresses and bandages you are accustomed to in similar cases, and then bid the priest, who will be in your hypnotic grasp, to rise and dress himself. While dressing you will notice that he will carefully place at one side an open letter, and a sealed package. When you have completed your experiments with the priest you will read the letter. However distasteful it may be to you to learn the secrets of a stranger's life, you will accede to this request, because the interests of this sufferer demand that you shall know everything without ever permitting her to divine that you know anything. The sealed package you will conceal from everyone until the mental condition of your charge justifies her knowledge, and possession, of the secrets it contains. Having read the letter, you will again direct your attention to Ambrose and for the next twenty-four hours keep him at the side of the sufferer. You will place him in an easy chair, close to the bed, and maintain your command of his curative En, until the dangerous crisis in the neurine condition of the mother, which your skill as a physi-

cian will enable you to detect, has passed, and the processes of the multipolar cells have evidently recovered from their present confusion.

On seeking, you will find that the servant has fallen asleep from sheer fatigue, in the hall below. Wake her, soothe her fears, and by sagacious questioning, learn all you can from her concerning her mistress.

To-morrow, you can make Amelie and Jacques the witnesses of the entire subjection of father Ambrose to your directions, as a still further confirmation of the preternatural facts concerned with this unparalleled occasion.

These general directions are sufficient. From the time our indications of your wisest course have been followed your own intelligence will dictate everything that is requisite to restore the health and strength of this beloved parent, and to preserve that of her precious child.

The future which you are all destined to enjoy together will repay a thousand fold for the cares and anxieties through which you are to pass, and for your faithful execution of the requests we herein make to you.

This mother and little one are of unspeakable worth to the divine substance of humanity.

They are thenceforth confided to the tireless care of father Ambrose, Amelie, and yourself.

A great wrong has been done by the father of this child.

What that wrong is, why it has been done, and who the wronger is, you will very shortly discover; but under no circumstances should you reveal to those associated with you in cherishing this pair, the identity of the guilty man.

Two things you must carefully avoid in the future: First: saying or doing anything which may assist anyone to detect the name, or family, of the person whose desertion has brought this noble young girl so near death. Second: you must neither say, nor do, anywhere that may interfere with the revelation of the whole truth, through the natural course of events. Do not forget that absolute passivity must govern your conduct in this entire matter. My death drove the wronger into the deepest depths of materialism. Complete surrender to the convictions of this creed has converted the unfortunate into a remorseless egoist. The philosophy of egoism, of which he is the greatest living master, prompts every thought, impulse, and act of his life. This logos of self-love must be permitted to bring forth its own fruit, the satiating flavor of which is the

only positive cure for the intellectual and spiritual disease, from which this philosophy springs.

Fiat Lux !

You will partially appreciate my relation to the doings of this wondrous day when you learn my name.

You will believe, and eagerly obey everything we ask, when you know through whom these words are conveyed to you.

You will treasure those entrusted to you with the same deathless devotion which you have shown to the memory of the unutterably loving one who now guides your hand as you write these lines : the woman whose proudest privilege and most perfect joy is to be :

Your Eternal Mate,

STEVNA."

At the sight of that name Lefort staggered back with a cry of frantic joy, and then sank into the chair at the side of the table, his eyes staring, vacantly, into space, his lips murmuring, with awe and ever increasing fervor :

" Stevna ! Stevna ! My One ! My All ! "

## CHAPTER IV.

## THE BRONZE CHEST.

IN 1860 Earnest Lefort, one of the favorite physicians of fashion, suddenly disappeared. Rumor declared that he had been called to Moscow by the dangerous illness of some Russian Prince. After a stay of over ten months he returned as mysteriously as he had departed.

The premature silver in his hair, and the air of mockery in his manner, which had replaced the frank and candid ways that had always been conspicuously agreeable in the conduct of the young surgeon, were all which the most inquisitive could discover, that seemed associated, in any wise whatever, with his prolonged absence.

In 1863 an eccentric residence was erected upon the borders of the "Bois," at Passy. Its peculiarity attracted immediate attention. One portion was exceedingly light and graceful in design, while another was inconsistently massive in construction and gloomy in appearance. Not a single window on one side of the sombre wing admitted light into its mysterious interior. Only the doves, for whom a spacious refuge had been prepared in the roof of the main section, could see that this dismal end of the dwelling was flooded with illumination through its roof. Public curiosity was piqued and when it became known that it was to be the future home of Doctor Lefort, the cunning ones at the club and in the salons cleverly connected the unexplained disappearance of the physician with his puzzling little palace. The merry or morbid imagination of these worthy members of the community soon supplied the scandal-loving crowd with a var-

iety of explanations for the outer architecture of Lefort's abode, which, had they been admitted to the trying test of type, would have filled volumes of startling or salacious tales, and thousands of good people with horror and revolt.

From the moment of his instalment in his new home, the surgeon inaugurated a series of reunions, which became exceedingly popular among the brilliant men and women of the best circles of society. The witty host appeared to take a feverish delight in soirees devoted to the freest discussions of social, religious, and scientific problems. Everything that concerned the welfare or affected the progress of the race was canvassed in the most unconventional, and at the same time, in the most unaffectedly refined form. Human passions and animal functions were as frankly considered as elemental principles or political purposes. This combination of breadth of

view, with audacity of treatment and fastidious decency of diction, gave to those “noctes ambrosianæ” a rare and wholesome charm.

The boldest of Lefort's guests, however, never dared to question their host concerning that quarter of his hospitable home to which they remained permanently uninvited. Only a few of the doctor's most intimate comrades were permitted to penetrate its remote recesses, and they continued faithful to the confidence which their entrance to its seclusion implied.

The forbidding attachment to the doctor's inviting abode, contained his laboratory, sleeping apartment, and private study. In the latter was deposited the treasure which was the cause of the physician's reticence and of that ponderous security of construction which gave a prison-like appearance to a portion of his palace.

There stood in the sanctum adjoining the doctor's bedroom a long bronze chest resem-

bling a sarcophagus. The exterior of this unique curio was decorated with exquisite art. The morning glory interlaced the ivy vine and both ran over a mass of moss, upon which was strewn with reckless profusion, pansies, camellias, and forget-me-nots. The apparently accidental distribution of these blossoms concealed the cunning deliberation of the floral design about that cryptic case. Two names were deftly interwoven by the seemingly aimless combination of flowers that lay upon the brown sod, whose bronze embrace clasped so securely the secrets of that repository. Even to the sister, who was his closest confident and comrade, this metal box remained a mystery.

"It is the vault of a sacred void."

These were the only words which he had ever uttered regarding that strangely chiselled chest, and they were said to Amelie with a manner that made further inquisition impossible.

In verity this coffer, whose exterior was so gaily bedecked with blossoms, was the locker of an awful loss, the coffin of a divine hope, the cradle of a deadly despair, the holy cache of a cruel delight.

No eye but his, had ever seen the contents of his adytum. It held no tissue of silk or satin; no grain of gold or carat of precious gem; not one of those many things—

“O'er which, from level stand,  
The low world lays its hand,  
Finds straightway to its mind, can value in a trice.”

It was devoid of all that market mind would prize, but it was packed with everything that was most precious to the manhood of its owner.

The busy healer of other's ills never sought rest, nor awoke to work, without kneeling at this shrine, lifting its ponderous lid, and for a time, losing himself amongst the maze of its sacred memories, absorbing from the passions and pangs which they bestowed, the sole

sanctification which this inveterate materialist had ever sought or accepted.

Within this pyx were three compartments. One of them contained letters that were the only record of a divine but utterly reckless love. Another held a hoard of trivial but treasured trinkets. The third, which lay between the other two, garded with its massive walls, the pure white ashes of a suicide.

The name which this cremated one had borne on earth was—Stevna.

## CAPPTER V.

## THE APPARITION.

THE personal attachments by sturdy temperaments exert an overwhelming influence over the intellectual activity of the individual. A robust brain often summons sufficient volition to resist the assault of a mighty passion, but the most puissant intellect will, ultimately, surrender to the steadfast influence of a supreme affection.

How frequently men of the highest intellectual force become the victims of worthless women, and how impossible it is for these men—whose minds have a very ready perception of the real value of all other individuals with whom they come in contact—to be taught, even by the most revelatory experience, the

inferiority of the one who, by some strange fatality, has succeeded in awakening the affection of an exceptionally potent personality!

Could the world have witnessed and understood the lofty grandeur of the atheist's love for Stevna Vakoff, all that was worthiest in it would have felt for him a new and lasting reverence.

Lefort was a man whose intellectual endowment was so excessive that it had enabled him to distinguish himself with ease in every field of science to which he had given his attention. The imposing proportions of his mind was the attribute which most emphatically impressed the world about him. His scorn of conventions, his independence of character, his hatred of hypocrisies, his merciless scathing of frauds, the outspoken courage of his convictions, together with his lofty indifference to popularity, won far less recognition than the force

of his mental faculties, whose logic was wont to deal such staggering blows to superstition and sentimentalism in the cause of materialism and its kindred bigotries.

Lefort's noble nature had known an all-absorbing love for one who was the highest type of woman kind. This love had brought to his life its deepest joy and its most tragic woe. But for the deathless presence of this great affection in the substance of his soul, all the exceptional experiences of that marvellous day of May would have received a very different interpretation by him, from that which their association with the name of the woman he loved impelled his mind to make. But for Stevna, Earnest Lefort would have firmly believed that all the exotic but incontrovertable facts connected with that night, were the result of some subtle vibration, emanating from the abnormal nervous system of the young woman who had just become a mother, and that her

hyper-hysteric condition had become so excessive as to produce a nervous disease which had contagiously affected every one in contact with her. The name of Stevna, the sight of her face, and of that burning sapphire which was the signal of the great secret between their souls, awakened with overpowering force the long pent up flood of his affections, and fixed forever in his mind, that unchangable conviction of immortality which was thereafter to influence every thought and act of his life.

In the tender but terrible hand of love men are but toys. The lightest touch of its subtle substance inspires the most frantic fear or awakens the wildest hope. The most stubborn will surrenders to the irresistible witchery of its gentle sway. The most positive mind is converted to the faith for which it has the least affinity, by the spontaneous logic of its living light.

One form of love had transformed a superstitious saint into a willing assassin. Another form of love conjured by an honored name, subdued the imperious will and convinced the unbelieving mind of the most hardened nihilist, rendering him from that hour, the eager ready slave of the extremest occultism.

The only romance and the chief reality of Lefort's life was associated with the name of Stevna. For seven years no voice but his, had ever uttered it within hearing of his ear. For seven years no hand but his, had ever written it within sight of his eye.

On that memorable night of the third of May, as the climax of all the distracting experiences by which his sturdy mind had been assailed, this name, for the first time in all these years, appeared to him by virtue of another will than his own, and under conditions that commanded him to believe that the individuality of the all-precious one so intimately associated

with that word still existed ; that her life was again linked with his, and that some great purpose was henceforth to keep them in close communion, almost in conscious contact with each other.

Torn by a terrible conflict between the dominating doubts of his naturally material mind, and the wild hopes of his worshipping heart, he now murmured with passionate appeal ; “Stevna—if this be true—if Immortality be not a myth—if you, my mistress—you, the core of my life—still exist, then, in pity’s name I conjure you—come to me !—Let me feel, hear, see you, that I may know, once and forever, that death is a lie, and love an eternal reality !”

As this low intense cry of his famished heart ended, a pause of breathless silence and suspense succeeded. Soon a faint luminous veil slowly emerged out of space into the dim illumination of the half-lighted room, and

hovered over the body of the priest, who lay with death-like immobility on the bed. Eager and anxious, the obstinate doubter eyed intently that nebulous mist. Gradually, in plain sight, that phosphorescent haze assumed a human form. Presently there stood before him—positive, and dilating with the breath of life—the figure of a woman. As her face became clear, Lefort started forward exclaiming with an almost frantic delight: “Princesse !”

His movement was instantly checked by a signal from the apparition which imperatively forbade approach. Slowly lifting her hand, this radiant messenger from the realms of the real, extended her arm toward her enraptured lover, who then beheld upon her marriage finger a jewel gleaming with intense ultramarine light. With a groan, he recoiled, muttering: “My God ! The sapphire !”

At the word the apparition disappeared.

Convinced at last of the certainty of Immortality, and of the ever living love of the noble woman who had awakened the sole absorbing passion of his life, his heart swelled with a triumphant consciousness of eternity that burst forever the iron bond of despair which had fettered it so long. Tears streamed down his cheeks. Swept away by the sublimity of the convictions which this transcendent experience had forced upon his ever doubting mind, he leaned over the table, his face buried in his arms, and sobbed with an ecstasy as great as the agony which a few hours before, had convulsed his ascetic friend and excited his contempt.

## CHAPTER VI.

## LOVE THAT CONQUERS SCORN.

IT was a considerable time before the strong man mastered the paroxysm of his passion.

Those moments of convulsion appeared to recreate the character of Lefort. The cynicism, bitterness, and harshness of the materialistic taint, were swept out of his heart by the lavish torrent of those cleansing tears ; and when at last he rose, his face was aglow with a spiritual grandeur that had never rested there before. The determination of a measureless tenderness animated his will. One single purpose aroused the force of every faculty, and that was to carry out, with the minutest care, each and every one of Stevna's directions ; to accomplish all which her great

soul could desire ; to be once more her proud and happy slave !

The harsh clang of a bell broke upon the solemn stillness of that mystic moment. It seemed to assert all the blatant vulgarity of the material, as distinct from the refinement and exquisite dignity, of the spiritual life. It increased Lefort's consciousness of the vast importance of the work entrusted to him, by the horror which it inspired at the possibility of any intrusive demand from the flippant world it was his professional duty to serve.

As the clang of the bell was repeated, the physician hurried from the room to silence the untimely intruder at the gate. In an instant he found himself face to face with Robert, who with much excitement, hastened to inform him through the iron palings of the villa fence, that the head of the great house of Rothschilds was dangerously ill ; that doctor Lefort had been sent for in great haste by his most dis-

tinguished confreres for consultation at the imperial palace of the mighty millionaire.

Lefort's reply was characteristic: "Tell them I am kept at a cottage by a more important call."

The coachman stared at his master, stupefied with astonishment.

Lefort startled Robert into activity by shouting savagely: "Be off with my message! And mark this: don't dare to return with any call until you hear from me that I am ready to respond." Then, as the servant hesitated, scarcely believing his own ears, the doctor hissed at him impatiently: "Va't'en!"

The lackey leapt to his cab; the sound of a horse's gallop died in the distance. Lefort, for the first time, looked up and realized the glory of the cloudless, star-packed space above his head, whose remoteness from the minuteness of earth's agitations seemed so wholly in keeping with the world-forgetting work that lay before him.

A king of mammon's realm had appealed in his peril to the surgeon's skill. How paltry and petty this appeal appeared, in comparison with that of the nameless babe born in the lowly villa of an obscure street ! As Lefort stood alone in the pathway before the house in which he seemed to have lived a lifetime distinctly its own—although but a few hours before he had never heard of its existence—there came upon him a full consciousness of the radical change which had been wrought within his own spirit, and which was fated to create so wide a difference between his future and his past life. He had been the champion of the manifest and the material ; the bitter opponent of all that was not salient to sense and easily reached by reason. He knew now, that his life was destined to be occupied with the occult ; that it was dedicated to the investigation of the mystic ; the search after the subtle ; the pursuit of the spiritual. He knew

that seekers after the psychic were regarded with contempt by all of his own fraternity; that they were forced to contend, not only with the prejudices of the social, and the professional worlds, but also with the rascality of that army of charlatans who are so prompt to make a pretext of the mysterious, for the practice of impositions upon the credulity of ignorance.

He knew well that if he dared to affirm to the scientific world by which he had been so long honored, the existence of such phenomena as he had just experienced with overpowering positiveness, that, in spite of the severity of his professional training and his well-known hatred to humbug, he would be declared a lunatic, or classed with those scientific smatterers and esoteric sharpers whom he loathed so heartily. Notwithstanding his past repugnance to this field of phenomena, notwithstanding that peril to his future, he

advanced to the consummation of the work which Stevna had confided to his care not only without fear, but with a glad willingness to endure all the reproach and loss of prestige which such a task might entail upon him.

In this spirit he re-entered the house, eager to undertake his difficult and dangerous commission.

To love he had surrendered all thought of worldly welfare, and, what was a far more magnificent proof of the self abnegation which that miracle worker involves, he had yielded up to love every petty prejudice of his positive mind, against a realm of phenomena which he had always regarded with aversion and contempt. Love that conquers scorn, is love transcending all belief, but that born of its own illuminating presence.

While hurrying to the room above, the doctor discovered Clarisse lying upon the stairs. She was in the profound slumber of

complete exhaustion. The hound reclined lazily at her feet, and eyed him as unconcernedly as though his presence in the house at that unusual hour, was an occurrence that custom had rendered common.

In his haste to reach the gate he had passed these motionless ones without notice. He paused, with a fleet surprise at all this, and then sped swiftly to his work.

Contact with the cool air of the night, and the sight of its soothing serenity, had entirely restored the calm and poise of his mind, without lessening in the least, however, the consciousness of the actuality of his experiences, or that conviction of Stevna's living nearness which inspired him with such a singular newness of purpose.

As he re-entered the chamber he saw that Lemaitre was carefully replacing the surgical instruments in the bag. Close upon Amelie's breast reposed the child.

The surgeon paused at his sister's side, studying the two intently.

The drift of the physician's thought as he gazed at the infant, was mortifying to his professional pride.

Superstition, through the priest, had fanatically doomed the mother. Science had summoned the surgeon's skill to crush and mutilate the mortal part of this exquisite little creature, whose spiritual worth it was impossible for him to adequately estimate. Nature—or that omnipotence of the whole which waits on every part,—and the infinite subtlety of whose perfect providence escapes the scrutiny of finite faculty—had rescued both of these strangely protected ones from the imperious prejudices of priest and leech, by wonderous ways.

It was with the humility born of reflection such as this, that Earnest Lefort commenced the task, to which wonder gave an interest so great, and love a sanctity so deep. Turning

to the manuscript which he had left upon the table, he examined it again, in order to note the directions with exactness. He discovered that it was composed of five separate communications. The first addressed to him in Amelie's hand, and the second, addressed to him in his own hand, he had already read. The third, entitled—"Substantial Intimation," and the fourth entitled—"The New Avatar," —borne upon their title pages these words:

"Not to be read until twenty-four hours after the experiences in the villa shall have been completed; and not to be published until many years of patient experiment shall have prepared Doctor Lefort to present this subject to the world in a manner that shall command the gratitude of the enlightened, and the respect of the sense deluded crowd."

The fifth paper was addressed to father Ambrose in the doctor's hand, and upon this was written the following request:

"The doctor will please retain this communication until the priest has passed through a normal sleep and awakened in the full possession of his faculties."

After concluding a number of experiments

upon Amelie and Jacques, are found the following remarks :

" I have done all that previous knowledge and present invention could suggest, to thoroughly examine my sister and pupil I have at length relinquished my control of their organisms and passed them into normal sleep.

The time has arrived for experiment upon the priest, and the observation of its reflex action upon the patient.

First.—That cerebrations essential to the formulation of original ideas, or exalted inspirations, cannot be induced by any exterior suggestion.

Second.—That there is a most vital and significant distinction between that which science has already recognized—as *unconscious cerebration*—and that which has been demonstrated to me here—*es non conscious cerebration*.

Third.—That the act of generation—and *all the views which affect its awful influence upon Humanity*—transcends in importance every problem of progress which is presented by life for the solution of the social scientist.

Fourth.—That never,—until the ignoble ideas entertained by the unenlightened concerning that act, have been abolished from the brains of the mass—can there be any just hope of lasting, or continuous improvement in the evolution of mankind. I never grasped till now the grandeur of that simple word—Free-man,—nor understood before the sublime development it announces.

Who has the right to claim a title that denotes such ages of emancipating mistake and misery, and therefore such a lofty rank in nature, as that much abused word indicates?

Fortunately the stenographic training which the doctor had received at school enabled him to record, with considerable accuracy, the utterance of the rhapsodic man,

Curious to test the effect of an interrogation whose suggestion of doubt might possibly goad the bigoted theologian into some new manifestation of original mental energy, the mentor asked : “ Was the conception of Christ the result of an immaculate or natural act ? ”

This question occasioned the most impetuous outburst from Ambrose, and started him into a whirl of wonder-breeding words.

As the query entered his ears the curate, at first, grew rigid, then the mindless immobility, into which his face had relapsed, passed into an expression of exaltation which transfigured his features with a beauty impossible to describe. After as light pause his head slowly fell upon his breast, and with a voice full of heart-seeking sadness, he commenced, in a rythm far less free than that of his former chant—the recital of this strange tirade—

“ The cruelest crosses of Christ are the lies of the Church He loves.

The fiction regarding his birth is fundamentally false,

Those cravens who shrink from the stain—are already touched with its taint.

Those who quickly wince at a word—must soon taste the woe of the weak.

Not a thing is vile but man's thought, for each, in its place, serves the all.

Every part completeth the whole,—whose perfection depends on the part.

The worm is a word in His phrase;—Man the volume revealing His will."

Then the priest strode to the side of the bed, and lifting his hands with a grandeur of grace that thrilled even the unemotional mind of the doctor, he pronounced the following daring declarations :

"Oh ! Ears that can hear let them list !

The astral ethers are ringing with the triumph songs of the just.

For the Verb of Harmonial Vigor is born to Man this night !

She bears the Evangel of Virtue—that saves from dirt and deceit.

That proveth the naked noble—the secret the source of all sin.

That strips the sanctum of sex—of concealments befouling its worth.

That shrives it of every shame—which confession has forced on its flame.

That purgeth its passion from lust—exalting its hunger with love.

That hallows its God-touching clash—and chastens it man-making choice.

Rejoice!—Oh ye children of woe!

The tender uplifter hath come—to lighten the load of the low.

The bearer of blessing is here—to heal the deep wounds of disease!

She comes to battle tradition—which denies great Nature her rights.

To show the betrayal by Church—of the trust of the low-born son.

The last words were murmured with cadences of joy most musical and sweet. As their vibrations died away the body of the young father sank softly upon the couch of the New Avatar, and passed into peaceful sleep.

Mother, child, and guardian, lay close in each other's arms.

The sight of their enlacement, conjured in mind of the doctor a vision of Palestine. The mellow light of that Mother-land illumined the scene of the carpenter's labor, revealing the self-crushing glory of Joseph—the shield of "man-lawless" love.

Two facts of deep moment to mankind were established by Lefort's experiments.

First.—The human organism was proven to be a mechanism pervaded by forces solely its own, or absolutely distinct from the animating substance with which it is usually associated, and which gives it all that activity rightfully called life.

Second.—That this mechanism might, under certain peculiar conditions, be surrendered by its normal animus, and pass under the control of influences reaching its centres of cerebration either from the exterior objective world, or from the *interior subjective* world.

The scientist's experiments upon this mechanism, made by outward influence, had resulted in the development of a most important opinion, which was forcibly emphasized by those rhapsodies of the religionist which had been produced by the inward influences penetrating his organism from the unseen world.

This harmony between the declarations of the mystic and the conclusions of the materialist, concerning the vast import of man's view of sex and of its noble function, is profoundly significant. This intense coincidence of conviction, between the substantial moral sense and the logical deductions of somatic research, accentuates the supreme consequences of this fundamental question in social science, and to that system of mental training which, beginning with boy and girlhood, is destined to deliver the race from that unnatural attitude toward natural function which is chiefly responsible for the deepest degradation and the most morbid diseases that now debase mankind.

## CHAPTER VII.

## THE RESUSCITATION OF AMBROSE.

BEFORE the morning light of the fourth of May had gilded the spires of Notre Dame, Lefort had completed his investigations, and had recorded phenomena which outstripped in strangeness everything ever before observed by the trained mind of a scientist.

The first direction followed by Lefort enabled the Invisible to transmit the command it possessed over Amelie, Jacques, and Ambrose, to the doctor.

Almost immediately after this had been affected a change took place in the aspect of Ambrose. The character of the alterations occurring in the aspect of the priest, were

noted in the order they progressed, with the most conscientious accuracy as follows :

Pain in shoulder so severe that I dropped the hands of Amelie and Ambrose, with an involuntary cry.

Slight change in priest's state now apparent. The ghastly tint seems to be lessening. Have placed the thermometer in his mouth with great difficulty. Jaws affected with what I should ordinarily suppose, was rigor mortis.

\* \* \* \* \*

After ten minutes the same resistance from jaws while removing thermometer as I encountered in placing it. Temperature 90 and 7-10. Saliva in mouth stringy, as in early death.

The skin is mortally damp and cold. Tint perceptibly decreased in pallor. Pulse indiscernible. Auscultation reveals no indications of activity in lungs or heart.

Have replaced thermometer.

\* \* \* \* \*

After sixteen intensely interesting minutes I am completely nonplussed. The cutaneous color proves that the vaso-motor paralysis has passed away, and would distinctly indicate vascular activity, but the most careful auscultation does not reveal the slightest movement of the heart, nor the faintest trace of respiration.

Is the eye a subtler detector than the ear, or is there a molecular vibration in the blood which may persist, independently of all heart impulse, and which may prevent, for an indefinite time, that coagulation which ensures death? Skin positively life-like. Circulation at surface seems complete. Muscles no longer rigid, although not yet normally relaxed. Temperature now—96 and 4-10.

In spite of increase in temperature there is the same perplexing lack of vital energy throughout the vascular organism.

Three minutes since last note.

First perceptible motion has occurred. The lids are relaxing and are visibly closing over the iris : which before, was at least one third in sight.

Temperature now—94 and 6-10.

Still nothing obtained by auscultation.

\* \* \* \* \*

Forty-two seconds.

Lids have suddenly risen with convulsive velocity. They are quivering. Pupils completely dilated. Eyeballs partially drawn up into sockets and fixed. There is no sign of consciousness.

Temperature increased one tenth. Respiration and pulse still absent. Auscultation reveals a faint, far off, monotonous murmur ; so slight, that I am uncertain whether the sound is not the product of my own imagination.

It has increased until I am positive it is the result of some microcosmic vibration from within.

\* \* \* \* \*

Ninety seconds.

Nostrils quivering.

Great God !

\* \* \* \* \*

I thought my experience in the field and in the hospitals had exhausted the possibilities of the horrible. I was mistaken. I can understand madness resulting from such a sight. Every detail will haunt me with the utmost vividness as long as I live.

If the horrors attending resuscitation are any indications of the pangs the spirit endures by a return to earth life, it is easy to understand the reluctance of those who have passed on to retrace their steps, and natural to believe that nothing—but transcendent love for those still lingering here—could gift them with the God-like courage necessary to face the appalling experiences which the throes I have just seen in father Ambrose would seem to declare, barred the road to re-appearance in this world.

Lefort continued as follows :

"Thirty-eight minutes since the first indication of change in Ambrose was observed. He now lies at the patient's side, with every appearance of health, but still unconscious.

Temperature—97 and 9-10.

Skin moist and cool, but not cold.

Respiration—19.

Pulse—58.

Heart action—regular, and normally vigorous, but slow.

Eyes open, and, though fixed, evidently fully fitted for the visual function.

The young mother's condition is peculiarly interesting.

Her temperature, pulse, respiration, and heart action are undoubtedly regulated by Bonnard's for her whole physiological condition and activity is precisely the same.

There is some profound affinity between these two, and yet my suspicion of their relation is rebuked by Stevna's words.

I am now certain, that so long as I maintain my hypnotic command of the curate, I can control the functional status of the patient.

There is no need of any anxiety regarding this beautiful creature. She can safely be left to the healing influence of father Ambrose, while I am making my experiments with Amelie and Jacques."

Only a mind as searching, a heart as pure, and a conscience as clean as Lefort's, would have dared to examine those subjects of scientific investigation as exhaustively as he effected. It was not his sister nor his pupil that he scrutinized, it was Nature—in all her terrible integrity.

Locking the door against intrusion, those two human manakins were restored to the unfettered freedom of the primal state, and the play of elemental potencies was tested with the audacity, but immaculate nobility, of a truly scientific mind.

He now proceeded to examine Ambrose, as faithfully as he had the others.

Aiming to discover, if it were possible to obtain from the clerical, any expression indicating cerebration that was independent of outward instigation, he ceased to command and sought simply to induce mental activity, by a series of questions.

After several attempts which evoked no replies that evinced the presence of any new or original thought—it occurred to Lefort to question Ambrose concerning the real meaning and rank of that elemental power in nature called sex. The moment this subject was broached the aspect of the priest was slowly

transformed. The light of real intelligence appeared in his eyes for the first time. Presently he lifted his head, and, in tones of triumph, burst into this rhythmic chant :

" In the realm of the Real-life  
Thus they word the Hypostasis ;  
Thus they poem the time sense  
The evolving of the princeps  
By whose potency love takes Life-form.

Long before the birth of Ages,  
God's nirvana was invaded,  
By a dream of mating love,  
And, half wakened by its wonder  
God soft whispered to Himself.

That faint whisper, born of mate-love,  
Broke the silence of the spaces,  
Wreck'd the balanced poise of Somos,  
From whose sudden-shattered centre  
Burst the awful circinations  
That first vortexed through the vastness.  
Whirling through the neuter plenum  
The discordant crash of Chaos.

But the law of that love-whisper,  
Tamed the aimless turmoil clashing  
Through the raging endlessness,  
And evolved from Anarch's storming  
Two completing forms of force,  
By whose power passion's tempest  
Ever tends to fruitful peace.

Did distinguish through the void  
Two unending separations,  
Ever eager to unite ;  
Did determine in the Protos  
Two close-touching oppositions,  
Each perfecting to the other ;  
Did abolish from the plenum  
All its primal neuterness,  
And established in its substance  
Two supreme potential yearnings,  
Two completing poles of sex,  
From whose commerce flows creation.  
Their coition breeding cosmos,  
Wedding Essence to Existence,  
Thus begetting consciousness,  
Through whose many wondrous lenses  
Streams the light that shows in life-forms  
Love is substance of all Law."

This chant was sung with a most weird and impressive emphasis, and proved such an unexpected exhibition of original mental activity that Lefort was startled. He realized how foreign this proem—as Ambrose called it—was to any concept in his own mind, as well as to the faith of the priest himself. He perceived that he was encountering a phase of cerebration quite different from any which his experiments with the others had produced. He became convinced that this chant was produced

by some influence entirely distinct from his own, and which was evidently of a purely subjective character.

He pursued his inquiries with renewed energy — asking fundamental questions, which, much to his disappointment, elicited nothing from the cerebral mechanism of the priest of any consequence whatever. Suddenly it occurred to him to investigate the religionist concerning a matter of elemental importance to the doctrines he was wont to preach. He supposed this inquiry would arouse only such cerebrations as the brain of the clergyman, when in its normal conditions, was most accustomed to evolve. He expected to secure a more or less fluent formulation of orthodox platitudes, but was thunderstruck to obtain from him the most fervent expression of ideas denunciatory of the fanatic's dearest dogmas, and annunciatory of concepts outreaching in radical audacity the dictum of the most heterodox.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## THE FATAL LETTER.

BEFORE commencing his experiments upon Father Ambrose, Lefort had commanded the hypnotized man to rise and clothe himself. While Bonnard was obeying this injunction the doctor noticed that, (as Stevna had predicted,) he placed to one side upon the toilet stand a carefully sealed package and a letter, whose pages he took pains to fold in such a way as to conceal their contents.

When the priest sank to rest the scientific researches of the physician were necessarily suspended for a time. Feeling fatigued from his long labors the doctor turned to his medicine chest for some stimulant with which to fortify himself for the work still before

him. This movement brought the package directly under his eye. He then observed that it consisted of a very large envelope whose edges bore a deep band of mourning, and that it was addressed to—Madame Constance de Vaugars. The name of Constantine immediately recalled Stevna's words concerning the patient. Lefort's curiosity became intense. The desire to unmask the domestic mystery surrounding this strange case almost equalled that which he had felt to solve the pathological problems which it presented.

The young mother had been deeply wronged. She had been the victim of one who had been driven into the deepest depths of egoism by the death of Stevna. This much the communication of the Invisible had revealed.

What was the crime, and who was the criminal?

Stevna had told him that he was soon to discover, but she had also warned him, in

emphatic terms, to beware of revealing his discovery even to those most concerned in knowing the truth. As the memory of her words grew vivid, his impatience to comprehend what she meant increased, to an extent which he himself recognized as almost childish.

He picked up the package, whose seals were yet unbroken, with a dim idea that a closer inspection of its exterior might in some way enlighten him. As he did this he accidentally pushed to the floor the letter that lay beside it. Its pages parted. One of them turned over and exposed the handwriting. Its familiarity instantly impressed but puzzled him. He lifted the page for a more certain look at its lines, when these words met his eyes: "Believe me there is but one absolute vice—hypocrisy; there is but one honest virtue—egoism."

The sentiment as well as the conviction that he knew the writer, deepened his desire to comprehend the cause of his patient's suffering.

Suddenly he realized that this was the letter Stevna had commanded him to read, urging him to do so however repugnant it might be to him to obtain information clandestinely. She had assured him that the interests of this fair victim necessitated this reading.

The hope of helping her decided him. He replaced the disarranged pages in their proper order, and read with ever augmenting interest what follows:

MY DEAR CONSTANCE,

A duty devolves upon me from which every fibre of my brain is shrinking with a cowardice that excites my own contempt.

I know, now, there is no escape for you for the consequences of my folly, unless I can convert you to that view of life which enables men to contemplate all the tragic possibilities of human existence with a complacency which nothing can disturb. How I am to commend this view to you, or induce you to adopt it, is a problem so difficult of solution that I attack its intricacy with the greatest reluctance, and only because the reports

made to me by our mutual friend, the Duchess, have convinced me that I must assume the responsibilities of the attempt, however repulsive the task may be to me, or however crushing it may be to you.

I am going to tell you the truth. What the poet calls love is, to the practical philosopher, the most fatal folly that entices or deludes mankind.

Love that is lavished with uncompromising devotion upon self, is the sole affection that does not beget laughter in the wise.

This assertion shocks you.

Before I finish I shall cut you to the heart's core.

Egoism is the religion of my life. It is the hidden and unconfessed creed of every one else. There is not a political or ecclesiastical institution that is not secretly instigated by self-interest and self-love alone. Patriotism, piety, even philanthropy are but magniloquent words of self-worship. Each man loves his country because it is his. Each adores the God, and believes in the sect, which is associated with his own particular mental limitations. Every act of charity is a deed that is delightful because it exalts, by a sentimental delusion, self-esteem. In a word self-

worship is the only real worship of the world, although the popular form of this worship, called Christianity, is the most farcical fraud that has ever been perpetrated upon that monster called the mass, "an ass that loves to be deceived and is seldom disappointed."

Don't be horrified, my child, at this unrestrained statement of the truth. Try to sever all association with this monster and your eyes will be opened. You will see, then, that while Christian institutions profess to adore a divinity that rebukes selfishness, as the sin of sins, they are really devoted to self with a craft, and passion, as amusing to the cynic as it is profitable to the charlatan. They are guilty of a system of false pretense, which, to the fastidious taste of a true philosopher, is as repulsive as a vile odor to the dainty nostrils of *une grande dame*. Believe me, there is but one absolute vice—hypocrisy. There is but one honest virtue—egoism.

The one dearest aim of nature is evidently to differentiate, high from low, little from small, great from insignificant, and yet all these ranks exist only in the reasoning consciousness of man. A fly may torture a saint into profanity, may destroy, with its useless buzz and irritating bite,

the sublimest flight of the poet's fancy, or the subtlest analysis of the philosopher's thought.

To nature, that fly, which is only a maggot with wings, is the equal, and under certain conditions, the superior of the highest type of man.

Nature's differentiation is accomplished by the desire she implants in each creature to preserve and exalt itself. In every form of animation the mainspring of its existence, and its development, is love of self, and the ambition to secure the supremacy with that self over all other selves.

You are wondering why I say all this to you now. You will learn presently, but first let me briefly show you that the philosophy of egoism is the absolute opposite of the folly of egotism.

Egotism is simply self assertion. It implies bad manners, and every folly which can possibly be induced by vanity, which is the father of every vice. It is the vicious counterfeit of the virtue of egoism. It admires but never masters self. Its religion is self-respect, self-improvement, self emaciation. Egoism is akin to the best form of stoicism. It has no affinity whatever with sensualism, or any other system of ideas which sacrifices development to delight—will to wantonness. With this explanation of the creed, which is the

key to my character, you may be able to understand why I have been and must continue to be cruel to you. Perhaps, too, you will perceive that I inflict an immeasurable misery upon myself, and that I do it because I realize that the integrity of my own identity necessitates this relentless course.

Now then to descend from philosophy to facts. Precisely three years ago, you and I started on a bridal trip. What a glorious May day it was! What a contrast to this on which I banish forever the most precious but perilous delight of life! What a vast desolation now! What a boundless exultation then! At that hour I seemed to own earth, heaven, and all they held and meant. To-day that seductive seeming has passed away, leaving me possessor of nothing but myself. The knowledge of that possession, however, is better, even in all its present bitterness, than the sorcery of that sweet illusion of one year ago. I recall that past now, to make the pain of this present more acute. The more cruelly these pangs cut me to the quick the more surely shall I be delivered from all touch of that annihilating lie called love. On the first of May 1870, I had gained complete possession of the one woman who

could thrill me with a desire that stung into activity all the passionate pulses of my egoistic being. The sight, sound, touch of you, seemed to convert me into a God, gifting me with a sense of power as vast as the potence, that poises and directs the stars. The pride I experienced in possessing you, transcended, in triumphal joy, any which a Cæsar could have felt in entering Rome with the captured kings of a hundred nations in his train. I had met and won, what I once believed was merely a sentimental fiction: namely, a spotless innocence. I had attained to what I would have sworn, once, was the impossible. The immaculate was mine! A mind most glorious. A heart most pure. A body superbly perfect. A face celestial. Eyes flooded with mystic illuminations which stirred the soul into exultations most unearthly. Lips whose sweet seductive curves enraptured all the sense. Lips loaded with an endless wealth of tenderness and mirth, on whose provoking lines played an archness as artless as an angel's, prophesying such infinite possibilities of naive and noble passion that they set every globule of the blood aflame; and yet lips revealing an innocence so sacred and supreme, that they awed and ruled the very tempest which that magic mouth aroused.

All this glory, throbbing with the magnificent vigor of youth and enwrapped in the glamour of a divine virginity; all this exquisite beauty, which the wealth of the world could not buy, nor the wars of the ages win—all this priceless treasure so unattainable to others, belonged to me—was mine—my very own.

Great God!—The thought of it almost overcomes me now!

For a year I fled, with my Eden, here and there and everywhere, pursued by a horrible phantom, by a tormenting fear of losing what I prized with a passion so absorbing and intense. The black uncertainty of the future shadowed the gorgeous sunshine of those fleeting hours.

No man ever knew two years so joyous sad—so bitter sweet—so blissfully agonizing—as those first great years when we swept through the world like two free birds, speeding wherever fancy beckoned, carried by our own caprice from the rugged highlands of Scotland to the beautiful intervals of the Danube—from the glaciers of the Chamounix to the scorching sands of Africa—from the barren peaks of Norway to the fertile plains of Spain—from the dreamy shores of the Caspian to the storm-clad coast of the Baltic—from the

languorous wine farms of fair Italy to the nerve stinging steeps of Siberian Mines—from the palaces of living Emperors to the catacombs of ancient kings—from the meeting house of the puritan to the mosque of the sensuous Turk—from the song-filled cathedrals of Christian Europe to the solemn silence of the Egyptian temples, which await—in the gloomy grandeur of a long tried hope—that resurrection of the dead which their priests were wont to prophesy so positively to the Pharaohs, whose mummies lie, swathed in spicy ceremonials, within their tombs.

Ah ! what years of sensuous joy and intellectual delight ! Tasting every pleasure—studying every theme ! Sense and mind equally alert to enjoy or to learn. Absorbing history amidst historic scenes. Gratifying every wholesome appetite with the fruit of every known clime. Living all we dreamed—dreaming all we lived. Testing and analyzing life at every point at which its myriad pulses appeared upon the surface of the social form. Seeking the solution of the mighty riddle both from nature and from man. Fearing nothing—daring all. Eagerly pursuing knowledge in the sanctum of the saint, or the slum of the revolting sinner—in the halls of wealth and

idleness, or in the lowly homes where labor never ends,—in the palaces of priestcraft, or the purlieus of crime.

Two years so God-like—yet so human—that their mere memory is enough to set me mad again with the reawakened flames of their myriad desires.

But no! To surrender, and return to you, would be to abdicate forever, all the sovereignty of my own entity. Another taste of life with you would thrill like a potent poison through every tissue of my longing nerves—would steal into the subtlest recesses of my person—paralyzing all the vigor of my own volition—annihilating all the substance of my inmost self!

Two years passed. We returned to Paris, and hid our happiness in the unpretentious villa, where you are waiting for me, now.

We had seen nearly all that was worth seeing in this world. Little remained that we might care to consider, except the unknown within our selves. It seemed as though we had become intimately acquainted with every one but each other. A new continent was to be explored, and all our future incursions were to occur within the realm of each other's consciousness. At last, we were to

roam, at pleasure through each other's hearts, and trail the intricacies and byways of the valves and plains and chasms in each other's character. We had been so busy living, and learning of other lives, that life, and the meaning of its mystery, had escaped us. At the Passy villa we were, finally, cut off from all creation but ourselves, and fatally forced, by our voluntary exile from the world, to face and find each other out. I believed that none but eagles could endure utter isolation, and they, only, because they live in the unfettered freedom of the upper air. Separation from society—I said to myself—is the severest test to which lovers can submit. When I took the house in the Rue de la Faizanverie, I felt sure that a few months, weeks, days perhaps, would tire out our joy—would reveal the finiteness of each other's knowledge—the littleness of each other's life—the minuteness of each other's mind—the paucity of each other's personality—the petty limitations of each other's love.

I, now, confess I caged you at the villa confident that the time had now come to loosen the ties between us. Certain that before long we should grow weary of our nest—gradually become bored—then irritated—then rebellious—and, at

last, so thoroughly satiated with each other's society that we should summon the courage to be frank, and set each other free—without regret—without scandal—without a spasm, except of happiness in the new found liberty to live apart.

I thought I had exhausted all the resources of your nature. Long as I had known—much as I had seen you—I discovered that I scarcely comprehended you at all. Seclusion developed new traits—wonderful powers.

While we were flitting, you revealed only a delightful capacity for enjoyment, a ravishing faculty for appreciating and responding to all the poetic and philosophic suggestions of the scenes through which we passed. The moment we alighted upon one particular spot to stay, you began to build a nest more novel, more fascinating, and more bewilderingly beautiful, than any other spot on earth. Every day brought a new revelation of the inexhaustible charm of your character.

While traveling, only your judicial and critical talent was displayed, but once permanently fixed in a house—which you called your home—and the word seemed to endow you with a vigor and activity which were simply astounding. Your crea-

tive genius, then, asserted itself, in every direction that adds to the beauty, interest, or enjoyment of home. Music, painting, poetry, cookery—it did not matter which you undertook—you proved your prowess, showing yourself an adept in the kitchen as well as the salon and the study.

I never left you, for an hour, that I was not greeted upon my return with some new creation revealing either the insight of a sybil—the inspiration of an artist—or the bewitching home sense of an enthusiastic housewife. At the end of the first month, I began to realize that every instant spent apart from you was an annoyance to me. Strange to say, I was fearfully bored everywhere but in my own home. Before the second month had passed I knew you were becoming an imperious necessity to me. I seemed to live only in, by, through and for you. When three months had gone all self-deception ceased. I saw for the first time, clearly, convincingly, that you were no longer the object of my desires but of my devotion. A strange and terrible reversal had slowly and insidiously occurred in the attitude of my entity toward yours. During the earlier time of our companionship you had been but the means of conferring all sorts of physical and in-

tellectual delights upon me. Three months at home had completely changed all this. I no longer sought you as the servant of my selfishness, but as the mistress of my soul.

Once you had been to me merely a precious possession—a treasure all my own. By some magic, whose subtlety had evaded my perception, I suddenly found myself no longer the winner and owner but the worshiper and slave. The tumult this conviction aroused within me passes all description. You may partly conceive of the meaning of this discovery to one of my temperament and birth, when you learn—what you probably never suspected—that I am a member of one of the proudest Imperial families in Europe; that if I live long enough I may be called upon to accept the responsibilities and wield the power of a throne. Yet, I, whose royal blood had ruled a continent, I had become the mere property, the willing serf of a brilliant little plebian—a gifted Americane—a child, almost, in years—whom I had stolen from her school! The idea was preposterous, but the reality was positive, unimpeachable, not to be denied. At first I scouted such a possibility. At first I was forced to acknowledge the actuality.

From the moment I knew that this was absolutely the truth, there arose a struggle between my will and its worship that was diabolic in its energy. The effort to resist your seductions, and rescue myself from the enchantment of your personal influence, made me almost insane. I have always been proud of my self-mastery. I once imagined that I possessed the faculty of suppressing the expression of any emotion, however strong.

The last month with you tested my ability to mask misery, with a smile to an extent I never supposed possible. Only once did I betray any sign of the battle within me. I shall never forget that occasion. You had just sung to me a song which you had written and composed. It celebrated the agony of the Magdalen at the tomb of the Christ. Its beauty entranced, while its truth tortured me. Its expression of despair seemed the cry of my own lost identity, and awoke such an infinity of anguish within me that, for a moment, I was dazed.

As you finished the song, you turned and saw something in my face that frightened you. You suddenly threw yourself upon my breast and wound your arms about my neck, crying, with a

terror full of tenderness : "Oh my darling! what is it? Why do you stare so strangely?"

That cry, those winding limbs, that heaving bosom, so heavy-laden with passionate love, overcame me. I was suffocated. I felt bound by bonds I was too abject to attempt to break.

In a moment of overpowering revolt I dashed you from me. You fell to the floor with a look of grieved amazement upon your face, so pathetic that it completely unmanned me. In an instant I had raised and placed you upon the lounge—had fallen at your feet—was weeping upon your breast.

It was the first time I had ever caused you a single instant's pain. The act inspired me with horror—crushed me with shame—overcame me with grief and forced tears—yes actually forced tears from my eyes—the eyes of a man who would have sworn that nothing could have ever made him weep again.

You were fearfully startled. You could not understand, but you lost all sense of my brutality in your misery at my condition. In less than a minute I had recovered my self-possession, but it was many hours before I could soothe your fears or partially laugh away your sorrow. When at

last you slept, and lay with the blessed peace of oblivion upon your face, I stole from the house and wandered into the darkest corners of the "Bois" overwhelmed with the consciousness of my own slavish condition. Long hours of self-counsel, convinced me there was but one of two things to do. I must either murder or flee from you—bury or banish you, forever, from my life.

I decided to do the latter. I foolishly fancied that absence might cure me of my disease and enable me to return, some day, to renew the joys, without fear of the dangers, which our glorious intercourse contained. With the resolution to leave you came a longing for one last taste of life with you. I determined that we should have one more week together and that it should be the grand climax of our existence.

With a fiendish fervor I planned the programme of those final days.

What a week it proved! I abandoned myself to the leading of my love, with the recklessness of a man who knew that this was to be the end of the world to him. What vibrations of sense—what inspirations of mind—what supreme agitation of soul! I discovered, in myself, a genius for enjoyment that was a revelation. I surren-

dered to it absolutely and revelled in the absorption of all my anima by you. Great God ! how I adore you!

The slavery of a great love is the sublimest luxury of life. But it is a luxury that is easily converted into a necessity, and then one's identity is destroyed forever. The Heaven of hashish is sheol itself, compared with the intoxication of self-annihilation which that much used, but little understood word, implies.

The grandest excitement of the senses that the lustiest passion can produce, is a pigmy experience when contrasted with that elementally opposite state of consciousness—that persistent inebriety of the being—that complete debauchery of the spirit—that never ending orgie of the essence—called love.

With what an infamous velocity that marvelous week disappeared ! The last hour arrived before I had time to realize or comprehend the ineffable splendor of the first. Ah ! that final day and night!

So long as either of us possesses the flimsiest remnant of a mind, the memory of the 15th, of July 1867, will remain to amaze and thrill us.

The end came.

At dawn on the morning of the 16th of July, I looked upon you for the last time. You lay, half naked, with the awesome repose of a happy innocence upon your face. I pressed a parting kiss upon your forehead. You turned and murmured in your dreams with a music which will haunt my ears forever, these simple, silly words : "Yes dear, yours!—all yours!"

I turned and fled. Not a tear in my eye. My skin cold as ice, but all the inner membranes of my body dry as parchment. Inwardly I was consumed with the heat of hell. I was strangled. It seemed as though invisible fingers of red hot steel held me by the throat, with a touch as firm as flint and as stinging as the bite of an asp. The extremity of the physical pain was a mercy to me. I blessed the partial effacement it occasioned of the full meaning of that last moment. If I had been the most infamous criminal in history the excruciating anguish of that departure would have amply punished me for all my sins. I passed out of that paradise like a phantom. I seemed, to myself, a ghost. I did not walk, I glided away. The silence was that of a sepulchre. I could not hear my own footfalls. The doors I opened and closed were noiseless.

Everything seemed muffled. Nature appeared to hold her breath. I would have given an eternal existence to scream but I knew that if you wakened and uttered one retaining word my power to resist would have been paralyzed—that my will would be eternally lost in yours.

The next two months are a blank to me. I discovered later that I had gone like a man in a trance to the nurse of my infancy, to the cottage of my foster-mother, a peasant who lived a thousand miles from Paris. From the time her motherly arms embraced me I became unconscious. Fever followed, and I did not recover mind or memory until autumn was well advanced.

I will not dwell upon the convalescence, or the return of the memory that recreated my desire—and fear—of you. I have said enough to prove that if I have been cruel to you I have been equally cruel to myself.

Before permitting myself to enjoy that last glorious week with you, I had seen our dear friend Diane and confided to her my resolve. You know her unquestioning devotion to me. She promised, with streaming eyes, to obey me implicitly. It was to her I entrusted the delicate and difficult task of explaining my mysterious departure, and

of gradually loosening the ties that had grown so strong between us.

On the afternoon of the 16th of July, she was to call upon you, and say that I had been summoned away on business of the utmost importance; that I had not the courage to bid you farewell; that affairs which could not be explained, made it impossible for us to communicate except through the Duchess. I know, from her, with what frantic grief you received this news. I know, from her, with what deathless faith you still await my return. It is all too frightful to endure. I will keep you in suspense no longer. Know, then, first—that every letter you have sent me through Diane remains unopened. I have not dared to read them. I feared their influence as a drunkard fears the wine that is his destruction, and that he cannot resist. I have known only too well, that a single taste of intercourse with you, even in the form of a letter, would cause a relapse into love which would end completely all my self-control. For this reason I have overcome the temptation to take one glance at your communications. They will be returned to you in a package which will be confided to the care of Pouska, whom you will remember as our courier while we were

travelling. He is my foster-brother, and he it was who guided me, to the hamlet of his mother, the day I fled from you. The package, which he has promised to deliver to you, alone contains a certificate of my death, a document which will free you socially, and leave you at liberty to secure peace and happiness with some one more clear of worldly fetters than I, and more worthy of the privilege of becoming your slave.

You will also find in this package my last will, and thus learn that you are the heiress of three million francs.

Who I really am you have never known, and can never know. When you receive this I shall already be well advanced on my way to a land you are least likely to think of visiting. It is useless for you to endeavor to trace me, and if you ever loved me, or if you care to save yourself from complete social ruin—even earthly existence, perhaps—do not hesitate to accept the perfect system of deceptions by which I have arranged to protect our past, and to provide for your future.

Only one thing more remains to be said. I must have a confession which you may not

survive. If it strikes you dead at once it may be better for both of us. However merciless it may prove to you, or however disgraceful to me, nothing must delay this confession now.

Constance, there is nothing that tests the stamina of my will so remorselessly as this necessity, which I now face, of making myself contemptible to you. There was a time when I would rather have parted with life than have lost the flattering distinction of being the sole object of your devotion. It has taken months of absence from you to enable me, even now, to tear myself from that place in your heart which your worshiping passion once assigned me, but the time has come when I must do this without flinching, and I swear to you that it is the last unselfish act of which I shall ever again be guilty.

From the first moment that I met you I have deceived you.

Our marriage was a farce. It was morganatic, and of no legal value whatever.

You have never been—can never be, my wife.

I am trembling like a craven.

I did not know till now that the curse of cowardice rested on the race of the man whom you have known, only, as LEO DE VAUGARS.

May 1st, 1868.

The sight of that signature produced a peculiar effect upon Lefort. He stared at it in a semi-stupor, for at least one minute, stunned by the suspicion which struck his mind. As this suspicion gradually increased, amazement, for a moment, outran every other emotion. When the full certainty of the truth was developed he sprang from his chair—exclaiming, with an intense and terrible rage: “It is! It must be! Leo! Prince Vakoff! that arch fiend; that modern Lucifer!”

Crushing the letter in his hand, he dashed it furiously upon the table, and, striding to the side of the bed, he gazed at the young mother with emotions no pen can express.

The sight of that chaste and noble face deeply moved him. His countenance, which, at first, was disfigured by a frown of almost brutal ferocity, gradually lost its look of hate. The high-bred beauty of the patient, with its pathetic unconsciousness and grace, cast a spell

upon the passionate man. Presently he muttered: "Another life wrecked by that monster!"

An expression of yearning tenderness succeeded his savage glance. He bent over the form in the bed, murmuring: "My comrade! my poor little comrade in despair! From this hour my very life is yours. I will scheme, struggle, sin, if necessary to right your wrong. Ah! I will never desert you! I will love and cherish you—as surely as I will punish him!"

Tears stood in his eyes. He stooped low, and kissed the victim's forehead, with a reverence that foretold the faithful devotion of all the years to come.

## CHAPTER IX.

## THE LAST COMMAND.

IN the years preceding the day when Lefort, responding to the call of Father Ambrose, had hastened to the villa with Clarisse, his interest in life had been little more than that which a desire for achievement occasions in an energetic mind. Society presented certain terrible problems which organized wrong seemed to defy him to solve. This defiance had given his existence its chief delight. It quickened his innate love of conquest. To wrest from nature the secrets which she most carefully concealed; to pluck out the heart of her mystery, and expose the principles that underlay

and overrule her every act; to discover and use her own powers against herself; that is, to acquire such a complete command of her methods that he could force her to rescue from her own inevitableness, the victims eternally provided by time for the merciless operation of her laws; all this constituted a purpose worthy of his will, and the steadfast pursuit of this aim enabled him to escape the ennui and disgust which the inanity, or insanity, of society would otherwise have brought a temperament as impatient of pettiness, or wrong, as that of this sorrow-stricken man.

Only twelve hours had passed since he had crossed the threshold of the villa, and yet, as the light of the new dawn stole into his eyes, he felt as though he was commencing a new career in another world.

How serve this unfortunate? How soften the blow which he felt sure would assail her when she returned to consciousness? To be

effectually helpful it was necessary that he should learn everything possible regarding her antecedents, and the events that led up to, and caused this dangerous crisis. At that moment he barely knew enough to understand that it was the sudden realization of the infamous wrong which had been done her, that had thrown her supersensitive organization into such an exceptional condition. In spite of the intense and long continued activity of his mind, he did not feel, as yet, any effect from the unceasing strain which his efforts had put upon his vitality. The discovery of Leo's connection with the case, had stung into the wildest energy every faculty he possessed. He was resolved to know, and to do, all in his power to alleviate the cruelty of the future to this afflicted child, and also to leave nothing unattempted which might enable him to adequately punish the crime which had been committed, by the man whom he, evidently, had some powerful reason to hate.

So eager had he become to learn all the facts, that he could not rest an instant, until his curiosity had been partially appeased. Who could most speedily impart the information he desired? Clarisse might know all. Would she tell what she knew? He decided to test her at once.

He was about to seek and awake the sleeping woman when he remembered that he had not fully carried out Stevna's directions regarding Constance and Ambrose. Curbing his impatience, he made a final examination of the physical condition of the young mother, tenderly bathed and rebanded her feverish body, and then endeavored to rouse the priest intending to seat him in the chair at the side of the bed, before questioning Clarisse.

To his dismay, he found the father inaccessible to his influence, and beyond his power to impress. He had relapsed into a state of trance with which the doctor no longer felt the courage to cope.

Worried and perplexed, Lefort cudgeled his brains to determine how he should deal with this new dilemma.

The loss of his hypnotic command of the curate's organization, was not only a surprise, but also a cause of the deepest regret to him; for it prevented the exhibition of that exceptional phenomena which Stevna had asked him to afford Amelie, and Jacques, the opportunity to examine. He had counted upon the persistence of his power over the priest, to demonstrate to his companions the positive existence of a new and vast field of most important facts.

While striving to think of some means of re-establishing his influence over Ambrose, his tormenting reflections were arrested in a manner that once more filled him with awe. The whisper which a few hours before had startled all of them, again reached his ears, repeating the very words which had ushered in that abnormal state of unconscious activity through which they had all passed.

*"Nature sides not—and slights not."*

Softly but clearly the sound of this sentence broke the intense stillness of the hour. Lefort stared about him, wondering no longer at the assertion of the phrase but at the mystery surrounding its utterance. As he turned his head he saw that Ambrose had risen, and was facing the ghastly gray light of the early dawn. He noticed that the father's lips were trembling. Presently their aimless motions became methodical, whispering: "Fear not. The triumph of love is at hand."

Instantly, the scientist perceived that Ambrose was influenced to repeat the former phrases, in order to reveal to him the means which had been employed to form the whispers which had first been heard. He saw, at last, that while the father was lying upon the floor with the chloroformed cloth upon his chin, he had passed into a trance, and under the control of the power then operating.

The whole proceeding was gradually becoming distinct to the surgeon's mind. Bonnard was the wonderful instrument through which this entire series of exotic occurrences had been evolved. This conviction relieved the examiner's anxiety. Through the priest—who was the focal-physical cause of the preceding events he would learn the course he must pursue, in order to secure, from the others, some sort of confirmation of this unparalleled phenomena. Humbly seeking directions from the unseen, the proud materialist interrogated the senseless machine at his side.

One inquiry was sufficient. The mystic anima, in substantial intimacy with the machine, foresaw all he sought, and supplied more information than the learned scientist would have known how to demand.

“Why am I unable, now, to control the organization of Father Ambrose?”

'This query awakened the full activity of the priest's body. The whispering ceased and the reply issued from the manikin's mouth, in a quiet but penetrating tone.

"Your question concerning the conception of Christ, reached to the very core of that aboriginal error which has misled and debased human nature for ages. An error so radical that it has been almost impossible to reach the race with the wholesome ideals essential for its grandest evolution. The first vulgar thought that was associated with the creative shrine—wherein the Inscrutable performs that miracle of miracles which peoples the universe with sentient creatures—that first indecent thought was the primal sin of prehistoric times. It inocculated humanity with an intellectual poison which gradually ate into the moral substance of mankind, and ultimately caused that decay of its manhood which led to the destruction of the grandest civilization which has ever

existed on earth. The other civilizations, which were evolved later, grew out of the remnants of that primitive enlightenment which was scattered by the revolt of nature at the desecration of her most vital function, but all the civilizations which succeeded, were tainted with the morbid mental virus which first corroded the race.

"The mysteries of India and Egypt preserved those poisonous ideas of sex which occasioned the development of asceticism and sensualism, the two opposite, and equally vicious, forms of that disease which results from man's unnatural views of nature processes.

"The spirit in which mankind is conceived is of fundamental importance. The mystery thrown about the sexual act, by what is mis-called religion, has engendered all sorts of morbid imaginations. These have begotten base ideas, the bred therefrom those deadly desires which have so degraded the sublimity of

the creative act. *Rot at the root is sure ruin to the fruit.* A noble humanity must be nobly begotten. The great truths, to be revealed by the new born, will completely reverse the ecclesiastical and social views, which now prevail throughout Christendom, concerning sexual relations. Within a century, from the time when the terrible but glorious life of this infant shall have demonstrated these truths, adultery, and all the revolting mental, moral, and physical diseases associated with it, will have passed from the world forever. From that time the evolution of the race, toward that perfection which is destined to endow it with omnipotence, will meet with no barriers that are not essential and helpful. The vast import of your inquiry struck through the organism of Ambrose into the spiritual world with which he is so closely allied, and re-established the ties which had bound him to us. From that moment you lost your rapport with

him, and, thenceforth, his cerebrations became the result of influence from the intrinsic world, instead of suggestions from the extrinsic world. The maintenance of our relations with any zootic organization costs us a far greater effort, and a much deeper suffering, than you can conceive of at present. As humanity grows more pure and humane, the pangs we endure, now, in our endeavors to influence its elevation, will pass away. Then our visitations will become more frequent, and the progress of civilization towards spiritualization will rapidly increase.

"The time has come for us to retire from all abnormal interference with the normal course of events.

"Note well what follows, for these are the last words we shall be able to convey to you, until years have passed, and the awful catastrophies to come call us imperatively to your side.

“First—for the immediate present.

“After we have completed this communication, the organization of Ambrose will be re-passed into your control, that you may fully carry out Stevna’s directions. To-morrow you will question Clarisse, and she will tell you much that will add to your astonishment, and put you upon your guard.

“All that you discover tending to confirm your suspicions of the identity of the satanic character, who is the self-sire of this holy infant, you will take great care to keep persistently to yourself.

“Now—concerning the future.

“You will become as a brother to this mother, and the principal guardian of her child. The infant’s physical welfare is in your hands—her spiritual fate is ours. You will use every influence to keep her from any contact with the teachings of established religion. Her mind must not be sophisticated by the dogmatic

falsities which so easily take root in the cerebral tissues of children.

" You will prevail upon the mother to give her daughter the name of Sania—a name which signifies sanity, wholeness, or health. You will do this, because her off-spring is the divine messenger of the whole to each and every part, and is born into earth life that she may unfold to mankind—in daring acts—that gospel of spiritual freedom which ensures absolute physical and moral health.

" In the natural order, this child and her mother will have the most startling and eventful careers.

" Your part is to watch over and protect them from material injury but under no circumstances must you attempt to interfere with any occurrence—however appalling—that bears upon their mental or emotional life. Passivity in this sphere, will often be extremely painful, and almost impossible to you, but it must be

constant and absolute, no matter what misunderstandings, or separations, it may temporarily produce."

The last communication, received by Lefort, was delivered in a clear but colorless voice, and with a mechanical lack of expression which was entirely unhuman. While this mere vocal telegraph was operating the doctor was busy recording the message it conveyed. As speech ceased he looked up anxious to ask further information regarding Constance, but the change which the appearance of the priest was undergoing, banished all idea of further questioning.

The corpse-like manikin slowly closed its eyes. Its hands fell limply to its sides. Its head hung down upon its chest. A shuddering soon vibrated through the whole of its organization. Presently its body emitted a peculiar, pungent odor, like the fetid perfume of a poisonous flower. This grew so strong

that the physician fell back sickened. A few seconds later this miasnætic breath passed away, and was succeeded by soft waves of air, as sweet and refreshing as a summer breeze blowing over the new mown meadows of the valley. Suddenly a perfume as pure as that of a lily pervaded the room, and immediately an exquisite violet light enwrapped the whole person of the priest, whose form dilated and assumed proportions full of marvellous majesty. Gradually the head rose, the whole body growing into a grandeur that strangely moved the witness of this transcendant phenomena. The tint of the priest's face became as fair and beautiful as that of a child in all the glory of perfect health. An ineffably tender and winsome smile appeared upon his lips. A splendid placidity crept over his brows. His nostrils quivered with a sensitivity indescribably divine —the whole countenance glorified with a grace surpassing the power of words to picture.

The eyes slowly opened, and as their precious light shone into those of Lefort he was inundated with a flood of emotions as blessed as they were beyond all understanding. The whole soul of the physician seemed to expand into a serene and beatific activity. He lost all consciousness of physical existence, experiencing, at last, the peace-poised potency of spiritual being, and the unmistakable joy of its sublimated life.

The gaze of those wondrous eyes deepened in earnestness—became awful, yet infinitely beneficent in their power. Finally a voice as musical and thrilling as an æolian harp wafted these words into his ears:

“Great-hearted hater of wrong, and lover of right! Dauntless mocker of lies and servant of truth! Scorer of base strength, and tireless healer of helplessness! To thee whose God-soul hath so often doubted God’s beings—to thee who hath so mercilessly denounced the

vain sense-God of the world—to thee, a high priest of science, is granted the sublime glory of guarding the earth-life of the Archangel of religious liberty—the consummating Messiah of the cosmic order.

“ To thee—I—the all-lover, all-sufferer, confide the inmost essence of my entity—my soul’s perfection—the celestial mate of my eternal manhood—whom I have dedicated to the darkness, of the death-life, that the low may be lifted, and the high humbled—that the gentle may become the strong—and the violent, impotent—that the vain and the vulgar may be forever bereft of vigor—and that nature may be restored eternally to her primitive innocence in the heart of man.

“ To thee, O! brother of my boundless love, I entrust the most sacred treasure of my substance. On thee I place the awful responsibility of the divinest privilege.

“ Great anguish shall conduct my beloved to

great achievement. Horrible pangs to super-nal perfections. Torturing throes to transcendent triumphs.

This is the cross of crosses which we bear once more that humanity may come into its heritage of divinity—that man may become eternally the consort of God. O! to this end cherish and adore this spiritual treasure of the universe! The conversion of the world from a cowardly conventional to a courageously God-like life, depends on your fidelity to my all-loving trust. Heed, and hold to your heart's core this one supreme command:

*“Guard, but O! do not dare to guide.”*

Ambrose kept his eyes on Lefort. Reaching back he found automatically the back of an easy chair close by the bed.

Slowly he suffered himself to drop into it, his gaze still fixed on Lefort. Reaching out his hand he clasped that of the senseless mother. Next his eyelids began to droop.

The lips again moved. As if from a distance  
the words echoed:

"*Guard, but do not dare to guide.*"

## CHAPTER X.

THE POLICE, THE PRIESTS, THE DOCTOR AND  
THE DEAD HOUND.

Endormation, the condition usually prompted by the master magnetizer on his subject, seemed to creep over the curate until he was completely in its control. Lefort had put forth no conscious effort, yet he knew instinctively that the man, apparently asleep in the easy chair, would wake at his command and resume his normal condition. The mystic anima had relinquished substantial relation with the fleshly envelope and transferred the power of normal resumption to the doctor.

At this moment a bell-peal resounded

through the villa followed by some reverberating blows on the outer door.

Lefort hurried to the window. His gaze encountered a small body of men.

The uniform of the police! The clerical santane! What might this mean? Hurrying first to Lemaitre he unendormed him with a touch and a word. Before a question could be put this command was rapidly emitted:—

“Wait! Go tend the mother. Pay no heed to the priest.”

Lemaitre was drilled by the habitudes of his calling. He instantly and without question obeyed.

Next the doctor raised his sister whose revived oral senses received:—

“No questions. Tend the child.” What had influenced Lemaitre influenced her—she went. Again the bell clanged; again the resounding blows from the outside.

Rapidly descending the stairs the doctor flung the door wide open.

"What is it? Why this damnable noise? There is sickness here." A Commissaire de Police stepped forward.

"If there was nothing more than sickness Doctor Lefort I'll regret the noise and soon release you. But there is sin as well as sickness. My intrusion is necessary."

"I salute you M. le Commissaire Veaurivard. *Nous verrons.* We shall see. *Tieias!* Pere Villegant and Abbé Lavegerie. Are you holy Fathers for the sin or for the sickness? The holy Fathers only shook their heads and sighed. At this instant the doctor's rapidly roving eyes fell on a man in citizen's dress who seemed persistently keeping himself in the background. The doctor swallowed a mighty oath and muttered—:

"The prologue is over. The drama begins on the instant," and the devilish ex-machine is wanting his cue to speak."

All this was but a thought flash. To the

little crowd he merely said: "Enter gentlemen. I am at your service."

Leading the way into a good sized room fitted with oak and leather furniture; doubtless the dining-room; he indicated the chair at head of the table to the Commissaire who bowing took possession of it. His men grouped at the back. The clerical gentlemen took seats on the right and left of the legal functionary and, at once, the proceedings assumed that air of ceremonial importance so dear to the hearts of the French officials. The citizen who had been the corollary of the doctor's mutterings had lagged behind, closed the street door and remained there, where, however, all that passed in the dining-room was completely audible.

"Doctor"—Began the guardian of public security—"I know you well enough to put my questions rapidly and tersely and be sure of replies which are in compliment. Your visit here is?"

"Professional."

"Case of?"

"Childbirth."

"Father's name?"

"Doubtful."

"Mother's name?"

"The same."

"Married?"

An instant's delay, then:—"They are strangers to me."

"You were sent for by?"

"A femme de chambre as it seems."

"Is the child born?"

"Yes."

"Healthy?"

"Yes—mind marvelously so."

"The mother?"

"*Nous verrons*—We shall see later."

"Who was in the house when you arrived?"

"The patient and—a priest."

There was a general movement.

"His name?"

"Father Ambrose Bonnard."

"What was he doing here?"

"Would M<sup>le</sup> Commissaire mind questioning the Father directly?"

Veaurivaud bit his pencil. "*Se fait*—yes—Why not." Turning to the Abbé—"To you my Father"—waving his hand toward the doctor—"Ask what you will." Father Lavigerie, an old man, apparently the embodiment of kindly simplicity, rose and spoke with a voice that carried in its tones the unusual flurry of his good old heart.

"Monsieur Lefort we are here because an accusation of the most hideous, the most awful nature has been brought against a member of our Holy Church. It is that our well-beloved and trusted Father Ambrose has been seen committing the vile and filthy act!"

"What act?"—asked the doctor. The old man tremblingly whispered:—"He has broken his oath of chastity."

" Who saw this ? "

From the doorway came the words: " I testify."

Pouska stood there red, pallid, beetle-browed.

From the Commissaire:—

" Repeat the words of your plaint to me."

" I swear that I saw the priest Ambrose commit an act of venery with . . . . "

" With who ? " — from the doctor. The man threw up his head replying with rancorous briskness. " Oh, some woman upstairs."

Again from the doctor:—" You don't know her ? "

" No ? "

" You are sure ? "

" But—yes" and the man Pouska scowled.

The doctor smiled.

" You are sure you saw the complete act committed ? "

" Parbleu" — the man laughed coarsely.

The Commissaire resumed.

"Who is in the house now, doctor?"

My assistant Lamaitre, my sister, the priest, the patient and"—here an expression of great sweetness grew into his face—"a wondrous newly born female child.

Turning his head to him *agento* the Commissaire ordered.

"Bring down the priest, Monsieur Lemaître, Mademoiselle the doctor's sister. . .

"Impossible," interrupted Lefort.

"My sister and Lemaître are necessary to the sick and the priest is endormed."

"Endormed?"—echoed several voices.

"In a mesmeric trance then"—explained to Lefort—"We must mount upstairs."

Veaurivaud arose. "Since it is necessary."

To his agents—"Remain and watch the door. The holy Fathers and you sir"—to the witness—"will come with us." Monsieur Lefort, please to lead the way. He did so, the Commissaire and Fathers Villegeant and Lavigerie closing the little procession.

On entering the bedroom the strange condition of affairs there evidently struck the keepers of morals supernal and terrestrial, alike priest and police.

The representative of the law gazed on the peaceful scene with an astonishment which, though deftly concealed from ordinary eyes, was evident enough to the doctor, used so long to those hidden narvine signs which no humane can quite suppress. The priests made no attempt to hide their interested astonishment. In truth the scene was unusual, all augurous of anything except crime or disaster.

In the bed apparently softly sleeping the very beautiful girl—as she seemed—reclined, her pose serene, breathing with gentle regularity. At her side her hand clasped in his, the priest—to all appearances as fast asleep in the chair as the girl was in the bed.

Near by sat Mademoiselle Lefort, a dormant child in her arms. Ordinarily there is nothing

moving in the aspect of a very young sleeping infant. But this little baby girl had features as defined and expressionable as a child of twelve months old. Another abnormality was that its skin was as fair as the sleeping mother's instead of being, as is customary with newly-born infants sanguineous in hue ; while the little head was covered with curling, sheeny fair hair, fine and shimmering as spun glass. These three faces were nearly in a line. From the budding beauty of the innocent babe the eye gratefully rested on the madonna-like loveliness of the mother, passing thence to the priest on whose fine features was an expression so celestially peaceful that doctor Lefort himself felt strangely moved.

Lemaitre was standing near the tranced Bonnard, gazing at him evidently puzzled. Sympathetically every step lightened, every face softened. Alone the accusing witness, last to enter the bed-room, seemed insensible

to the tranquil aura which emanated from the three sentient creatures, whose entities were midway between future and present, guarded by that potential but gentle sleep.

Lefort went to the babe.

"Fast asleep, eh?"

"Yes," replied his sister, answering the question, but looking toward the intruders.

The doctor put his hand on the little one's brow for an instant and whispered. "Sleep, sleep." He then turned to his assistant.

"A little puzzled, eh Lemaitre?"

Lemaitre smiled and nodded.

"*Attendez*—wait."

Next he went to the mother. Lowering his head he auscultated carefully. As a result of his examination he said to himself: "Lighter, but still more than sleep."

Turning to the Commissaire he said sonorously:

" You can commence questioning Monsieur. You might begin with my assistants. The others are, as you can see—asleep—" here he smiled—" and you will find that your questioning won't wake them—neither can your will or any thing you can do. As I am anything but adversative in their connection I may if you wish come to your rescue bye and bye. Ordinary sleep is sense-rest; with those three, every somatic atom, the very mendula is latent, inert, torpescient."

The Commissaire's examination of Amelie and Lemaître was necessarily found with details which multiplied surprise with astonishment at every turn.

Thus their evidence: They were sent for in breakneck hurry. A dead mother was to yield her living child under the stress of knife and saw.

Even this paramount decision was coercive, the reverse process having been first selected—

embryotomy by the process of basiotripsy; but the priest had commanded, had used dangerous means to reverse the conditions of life-saving—the child first, then the mother. The struggle between physician and priest, the saver of life and the saver of soul, was described. Then the apparent death of the mother and the decision to attempt the rescue of the child by the cæsarian cut—and then—then they seemed ashamed to testify.

“ Well? ”—questioned the police official, breathing stentoriously, of Lemaitre.

“ He heard a whisper.”

“ What? ”

“ *Nature sides not nor slights not.* ”

“ Where did it come from? ”

“ I do not know.”—said Lemaitre.

“ What do you say? ” turning to Amelie.

“ I confirm that.”

“ You heard the whisper? ”

“ Distinctly.”

"You could not trace it?"

"No."

"What else?"

"Another whisper."

*Fear not, the triumph of love is at hand.*

"Then you found out who it was?"

"No."

"But that is *invraisemblable*. The closest translation would be untruthlike."

"It is true!!"

This from both Amelie and Lemaitre with almost frenzied simultaneousness.

"Afterwards? What next?"

"That is all!"

"All! What mean you?"

"I lost consciousness. The next thing I can recall is receiving an order from the doctor. I seemed to wake out of a sleep. The doctor forbade a single question."

"And you Mademoiselle?"

"The same—word for word."

Veaurivaud threw up his hands, and swung himself round to the priest's who met his questioning gesture with a helpless shrug of the shoulders; their faces were eloquent of dismay nor was nascent appreciation absent. The witness had listened to the gruesome story of the fight eagerly. Now even he seemed abashed.

The Commissaire resumed his embryonal inquisition.

"Dr. Lefort you have heard all this. Is it, can it be true?"

"It is true in the minutest scintilla of every particular."

"But the mother is alive!"

- "The mother is alive."

"The child too!"

"And the child."

"Can you explain?"

"I might relate; I could not make you understand. Something has happened outside

the pale of probability: beyond the region of ordinary comprehension; something that will be, or become, independent of your power—civil, or mine—scientific. Will you permit me to put a question or two?"

Veaurivaud passed his hand impotently across his brow.

Think! A French commissaire de police feeling helpless and revealing his feelings!

"*Allez allez*—go on."

"You came here at the instigation of that man"—indicating the witness Pouska.

"Yes."

"May I question him?

"Yes."

The doctor turned to the witness.

"Advance my friend."

The man moved forward.

"What is your name?"

"The police have it."

"But I have not."

"That's their affair."

The doctor smiled.

"Your name is Pouska."

The man started.

"What are you?"

"A gentleman."

"You lie—you are a servant in the employment of—"

Pouska blurted out:—

"Well I am in the confidence of Monsieur Leo de Vaugars."

"Leo De Vaugars, eh?"

"Yes."

"You probably know then who that lady is?"

"Yes, his mistress and"—sneering and glancing at the dormant Ambrose—

"Others."

"Why did you go to the police? Why summon the holy fathers?"

"Because I was the witness of a brutal act."

"Then you were actuated by a sense of decency and a regard for public morals?"

"Why, certainly."

"Are you sure you had no end to serve?"

"What end could I have?"

"For instance the defamation of that woman's character"—pointing to the mother.

The man jerked his shoulders up towards his ears.

"*Mais, tête de Dieu*—Why?"

"Were you not glad to see what you saw?"

"Glad? No. Indignant and disgusted of course."

Lefort made a gesture and strode forward until he was peering into the man, Pouska's face and said in a low voice stinging with sarcasm. "Why you would lick the feculent mud from your master's boot and feel no disgust. What right has a moujik serfe to indignation?"

Pouska was no ordinary man. He had plenty of brute courage and great nerve control, yet at these words though he didn't start, though not a muscle moved, not an eyelid quivered, his eye-balls protruded out towards the doctor and seemed to flicker. The man remained dumb, motionless. The doctor had seen and was satisfied. Turning to the Commissaire he said:—

“ Monsieur le Commissaire, as you know, almost anything, however strange it may seem, is permitted when the life of a human being is menaced. You are informed that the priest there”—gesticulating—“ is a lecher and an oath-breaker; that he and the woman there were seen in a condition of complete denudition lying side by side. It is true and—*it was necessary.*” Swiftly glancing towards Pouska. “ You did not speak of the hound. Had the man there reported accurately he would have told you that an almost moribund woman, a

human shell with a living kernel was borrowing vital heat from an unclothed man on one side of her and—parbleu! an unclothed hound on the other. By this time M. Veaurivaud abandoned his usual habit of theory-forming. The case was so astounding. He concluded to listen only and record evidence. The good priests had never done anything but patiently listen; needless to say they were brain-numbed.

It was almost with lassitude that the Commissaire asked:

“Where is the hound?”

The huge beast was at length discovered under the bed. No animals quiescence being commented on it was discovered that the dog was dead! At this Pouska seemed unrestrainedly troubled. Why?

## CHAPTER XI.

## THE SURGEON'S TRIUMPH.

ALL this time every member of the strangely constituted group, except the sleeping or en-dormed, had remained standing. As if flexed by the encounter of so much that was exhaustingly perplexive, by common accord all sought chairs, M. Lemaitre obligingly bringing several from adjoining rooms. Dr. Lefort alone remained erect and, as soon as the others were seated, began almost as if he were delivering a lecture.

"I have said the mother was dying. She was. In any case I apprehend she must have fainted. Let us suppose that Father Ambrose

discovered her condition and, let us say, determined to take the mighty risk of acting as he did in the hopes of saving not one life but the two. Well the two lives are saved. Mother and babe both live."

Here Père Lavigerie interjected—

"If we could only question Father Ambrose himself."

"Yes"—approved the Commissaire—

"You said you would help us, doctor."

"Can your skill rouse the Father there? If we could get his version of things from himself—"

"I think I shall have no difficulty in unendorming Father Ambrose, but what he will do or say, what his cerebellar condition will be when he is roused I know no more than you yourself. He was half mad once. If he awakes he may be wholly mad, or entirely sane.

Going to Ambrose he auscultated carefully and took his pulse. "Heart action and pulse are both normal. That this is something more than sleep I will immediately convince you. Come yourself M. Veaurivaud to the patient and try and rouse him."

Notwithstanding his nervousness Veaurivaud went. He shook the apparently somniferous priest by the arm, pulled him this way and that. Whichever way the body was pulled it went and remained there. All the sustaining muscles and sinews seemed to be elastic and yielding, flexous rather than flaccid, but to shake away the torpor which was regnant over the senses seemed impossible.

Dr. Lefort watched the futile efforts of Veaurivaud with an amused smile.

"Shout in his ears"—was suggested.

Veaurivaud looked towards the bed. Lefort understood the action.

"Don't be afraid. You won't wake the other sleepers. Shout in the Father's ear. You

will see it wont disturb him. You might fire off revolvers, guns, even cannon close by his side; it wouldn't even effect the regularity of his breathing." Veaurivaud bawled in the priest's ear; he even went so far as to pull the priest up bodily from his chair and let him fall back into it. In vain. The endormation was in no way disturbed. The Commissaire withdrew discomfited.

"Look here"—said the doctor baring Ambrose's arm and picking up a pair of sharp pointed scissors. "This would wake any mere sleeper, wouldn't it?"

With this he jabbed the points of the scissors into the soft flesh of the bared arm frequently to a depth of nearly a quarter of a inch. Not the slightest effect was produced. Drawing down the sleeve Lefort turned to Veaurivaud and asked in a tone that had that a little touch of triumph inseparable from the successful performance of an operation, however puny, by every surgeon:—

" Well my friend ? Are you convinced that the man sleeps as you never saw a man sleep before ? The resounding role-call for the famous final judgment wouldn't wake him. Look here—"

With his thumb he lifted an eyelid showing the ball turned up in the socket revealing nothing but the white which the doctor freely touched with his finger.

" You can do this with calalepsy but not—but there; you are satisfied, eh ? "

" Entirely. That is a kind of sleep I have never seen. I've heard of mesmeric sleep and trances but—"

" But being a dealer in cumulative facts the 'what is's' you leave us scientists to dabble in the 'what may be's.' Quite right. Now I think I shall have no difficulty in waking the patient and you shall see all that I do and if you like you shall see if you can arrive at similar results with the mother of

the babe there. Let me add that the woman has been more or less in the condition she now is ever since I was called in. I have never yet heard a sound of her voice. I do not know that any of us ever will. My present experiment will assist me to determine. Now mind I do not know whether I shall presently rouse a raving mad-man or sane human being. That responsibility is with you."

Going to Father Ambrose he settled him comfortably in the chair laying the head back. Retreating behind the *endormeur* he passed his hands, the fingers extended, from the region of the heart up over the face and head throwing them out and away right and left. Repeating this action three or four times he blew twice on the priest's forehead and said:—

"Awake, Father Ambrose!"

A group of men in a highly tensile condition watched. Curiosity and fright were equally assertive. A little start; the eyelids twitched,

lifted; the arms were stretched out; a half stifled yawn; the eyes, wide opened, fell on Lefort and, in his ordinary calm voice, Father Ambrose said in a way that was more like somniloquism than speaking—

“ Ah, doctor. I’m very sorry, but I’m afraid I fell asleep.”

The tension relaxed: one great breath of relief was taken.

## CHAPTER XII.

## A PRIEST AND YET A PARENT.

"Ah doctor? Did I fall asleep? It was very reprehensible! Pray forgive me." A pause, a quick snapping of the eyelids accentuating an expression which indicated a reaching back of the memory in search of past events; an illumination of the countenance which spoke as plainly as verbal utterance could have done that the search was successful and the *soi disant endormeur* continued in anxious tones:—

"Ah, the patient! Poor creature, how is she?"

Easily, naturally, without taking any note of the other occupants of the room, Father Ambrose rose and bent over the sleeping mother.

Lefort noticed at once that the tone of voice and manner of the speaker had materially changed. The Father was as Lefort had always known him. Gentle in manner, soft of voice, humble and unassuming—he exchanged glances with his sister and Lemaitre. Ambrose was well known to the police as he was to the Reverend Fathers who were watching him. His present manner was, therefore, only what they expected. What Pouska thought was by no means to be gathered by any examination of his heavy features.

Ambrose lifted his eyes to Lefort's.

"She seems to be sleeping peacefully." Turning he became aware, evidently for the first time, of added occupants to the room. With his customary sweet smile and out-

stretched hand he went towards the Fathers with “*Vous ici mes pères?* You here my Fathers? and the good Chief of Police.” Next he bowed to Pouska—who it will be remembered he had not seen, so, of course, did not know. “I am not surprised to see you Monsieur Veaurivaud nor, indeed, you *mes Perés*. Strange things have been happening. Some of us here”—his voice and manner growing awesome—“have been hovering in the intramundane ether; perhaps indeed on the borders of the Supernal or—crossing himself—the infernal spheres. I am glad you have come dear Fathers. I have been sorely troubled. All is much clouded even yet “and”—pressing his palm between his brows—“I fell asleep. Perhaps exhausted as well as overcome. But “the frowning of the brows disappearing—I feel perfectly myself now, doctor.” The Commissaire’s eyes had not left Father Ambrose since he had been roused. Veaurivaud now rose and said—

"Will you excuse me a moment?" Turning to the priests he added "good Fathers, would you come with me?" The Fathers Lavigerie and Villegeant silently left the room. The Commissaire followed, closed the door to within an inch or so. Keeping his ear at the space he hurriedly whispered:—

"I want to depart from our ordinary methods of procedure. Instead of questioning Ambrose myself I want you to do so. Treat him please as if you knew nothing, and draw from him his version of all the events here he is cognizant of." The whispered direction had hardly taken half a minute. They were back in the room. The Fathers Lavigerie and Villegeant moved their chairs near to that occupied by Ambrose, Bonnard, placing them so that the three sitters formed the points of a triangle. Ambrose faced the Fathers. Lavigerie commenced with:—"Mon fils, some very strange and moving events have been taking place here.

Rumors of them have reached us. Can you tell us all about them?"'

" Assuredly good Fathers, willingly and gladly. I have been moved to great fear and my human compassion has been stirred—stirred do I say? Volcanized is rather the word. Think, good Fathers, the supreme happenings there must have been, when I, a priest, was driven to make an onslaught on my well-beloved friend the doctor there. By Jesu, Fathers"—the utmost pain twitching every facial nerve—" if he hadn't drugged me helpless the *savant* would be lying there with one of his own dreadful knives in his heart. Listen"—then he related, to surely the most attentive knot of listeners that ever hung on the lips of a speaker, the events whose details have already been printed and perused by the reader. A repetition would be wearisome to most people even if galvanized by Ambrose's seemingly inspired language, and touchingly reverential narration.

The inspiration that dictated the story of the birth of Jesus was not missing in dealing with events which anteceded the entry into this mundane sphere of the New Avatar. Rapidly and concisely he referred to the cries he had heard ; his hurried entry into the house ; his discovery of the perishing human jailor of the living babe. Here his *ipissima verba* must be quoted.

" I am a priest my Fathers and knew but little of the process by which the ceaseless wheel of creation among living things is kept in motion by the motive power whose furnisher is our great God Himself, but I felt that cold was sure death to one if not two of His creatures. I looked at the prostrate mother. There was a great black hound there. He helped me decide, I bore the dying mother here. I bared the sacred human casket. Her body was cold, cold ! Death's icy fingers were surely on her. In an instant I had stripped, and the

hound and I enwrapped her close and were fighting the cold Terror King with our own warm bodies. My Fathers, for a time I felt happy, proud; important as a sentry at some dangerous out-post on whose vigilance depended—*life!* Then “—blushing—” something happened, whose telling is for the confessional alone—it may have been a grace of God—or a devilish, suggestive temptation, but, my Fathers, though a nude woman was in my arms, pressed close to my heart, my body is still the Church’s,” and—rising and lifting high his hand—“may the Almighty strike my life away and mark my soul for everlasting perdition if I am not as much, nay more, much more his priest now, even, than I was yesterday!”

The impression these words created was profound.

The spy Pouska trembled from head to foot.

From the bed proceeded a long drawn sigh which turned all heads in the mother’s direction.

A smile of ineffable sweetness formed on the somnipathist's beautiful features, her head turned very slightly towards Ambrose, then towards her child. Ambrose moved rapidly to Miss Lefort and, taking the babe from her arms he laid its little face beside the mother's whose lips rested on the velvet cheek for the time.

"The first time the mother has moved."—whispered Lefort grasping the Commissaire's arm. The smile died away. Ambrose carried the child round to the priests resuming—"And yet, my Fathers, I am drawn to this little atom in a way you cannot understand and I cannot explain. This child seems to me, feels to me"—folding it in and with his arms as a mother would—"as if it were my own. My heart teems with a paternal love for it! My Fathers, it is a mystery, a miracle of God! I am a priest and yet I feel a parent!"

## CHAPTER XIII.

## THE MOTHER SPEAKS.

ALL this time Pouska had remained a passive spectator. A harsh laugh from him now jarred the ears alike of official and clerics : “The Father’s paternal feelings are not hard to understand!”

Ambrose turned and looked gently at Pouska seeming to take complete notice of him for the first time. He asked: “Who is this gentleman?” Pouska paused a moment. Evidently making up his mind what was to be his definite course of action.

“I am the man who saw you commit the act of shame with the woman yonder.”

Ambrose was undisturbed. "Ah!" he said, "you must have come in while I was insensible."

"There was'nt much of the insensible about your act"—sneered Pouska. Apparently Ambrose did not hear. His eyes were on the sleeping child. Softly he went towards the doctor's sister and, with almost curiously minute care, replaced the child in her arms. "Well gentlemen," enquired Lefort "what is to be done?" "There is only one thing to be done," —intruded Pouska—"the priest there will have to suffer the pains and penalties of his act. Representing the owner of this house and the woman there I have only to . . . ."

"Not another word," commanded Lefort, "or I shall inform every one here who *is* the owner of this house."

"There is no secret about that"—blurted out Pouska in a bullying tone. "My master, Monsieur Leo de Vaugars, is nobody of impor-

tance. I'm very sure the police have never heard of him." The doctor retorted with a smile: "But I think the police are familiar enough with the name of Prince Vakoff!"

"*Dieu de Dieu*"—exclaimed Monsieur de Veaurivaud in a tone of excitement at variance with the restraint usually practised by the members of his calling. "Is this the house of Prince Vakoff and is that lady his . . . ?"

"This is the house of Prince Vakoff and he is the father of that child"—pointing to the baby,

"How are you going to prove that my master, who I declare to be an ordinary private gentleman, can be any one as important as—" "Silence!"—thundered the Commissaire—"Monsieur Pouska you are arrested. You have evidence that the man Leo . . . ?"

All in the room were now startled. The name of Leo was repeated in very soft, but exquisitely musical tones from the bed. The lips of the sleeping mother were parted; the eyelids were twitching. "Leo, dear Leo!"

The voice still sounded far away. Not alone the eyelids, but all the facial muscles were in movement. Presently reflex nervous action was traceable all over the torso, and, to the extremities, next absolute tranquility for some few seconds, a deep sigh and the beautiful eyes opened. They fell first on the police and the Fathers Villegas and Lavigerie. She smiled sweetly, but said nothing. Then turning her head a little she discovered the child, and for the first time in clear and pure musical tones the true voice was heard. "Ah! my baby! My little baby child!" A smile of ineffable sweetness overspread the delicately lovely features; her arms were stretched out; the sleeping infant was placed in them, and folding it to her bosom, the musical voice again pronounced the words—"My child; my little baby child!"

## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE MISSION OF THE NEW AVATAR.

How wonderful are the processes of nature even to the ignorant! To the enquirer and student they are necessarily prodigious. It will be remembered that this woman, in a condition that needed the utmost consideration and care, had been struck senseless by a terrible shock. Her world of love had crumbled into dust; at the same moment dire infamy had descended upon her. She had more than hovered between life and death. She had been a moribund and a resuscitant! Yet on recovering the full measure of her senses the maternal instinct was the first to assert itself.

The greatest of loves had been her's and had betrayed her ; the sweetest of loves was henceforth a puissant possession, from which, if she were true to the mighty human trust of maternity, she could be dispossessed.

" You are glad you have your baby?"—asked Doctor Lefort.

" Oh, yes doctor ; so glad, so very, very glad." She lightly brushed the infant's cheek and ear with her lips as she uttered that low purring sound which mothers keep for their young.

" How did you know I was a doctor?"

She appeared to be gradually remembering. " I don't know yet, quite, but you are a doctor and helped my baby into the world and I will always love you for that. And that"—looking up at Miss Lefort—" is your sister!"

Constance was now lying on her side the child cradled in her arms. The police, priests and Pouska stood near the bottom of the bed,

while Ambrose and Lemaitre, being on the further side, were behind her.

"Your voice is very strong, you feel well, don't you?"

"Quite well. You know I am to be spared all accouchement sickness. You will find when you examine me presently that every organ that was strained, or displaced, is now in its normal condition." She touched her side—  
"You have bound me I see. It was hardly necessary. I have been away with the astral Bygas and they have tended me, but they used your hands, because I'm flesh and they needed flesh hands; and they made you cleverer than you ever were before—and they said you were clever too—but in the boundless univercoelum where I have been there are myriads of Byga healers, and they all concentrated and focused on you while you tended me. Then when you had replaced the strained organs they drenched me with Nirvana, so I am well. The Bygas are good doctors."

Lefort smiled and nodded. "I understand." Glancing at Ambrose he perceived that the priest who, in common with all present, was an attentive listener, seemed an aural recipient of expected rather than astonishing revelations. All the others were silent wonderers.

At this moment Constance for the first time noticed the presence of the Commissaire, the Fathers Villegant and Lavigerie and Pouska. Her eyes flashed and fixed themselves on him. Placing the infant on the side of the bed nearest Ambrose, and still keeping her eyes on the man she reached out a hand, caught up a large silk shawl that hung over the back of a chair near her, threw it round her and lifted herself with a single movement high in the bed. Doctor Lefort instantly put out a warning hand, but, then remembering that she had announced herself free from any danger of sudden movement, withdrew his arm.

" You here, Pouska. Ah, now I remember everything. It must have been you who brought the Count's letter?"

"It was"—surlily acquiesced the man.

" How dare you use that tone of insolence to me?"

" I—I—saw you"—blurted Pouska.

" Saw me? Where?"

" With the priest."

Constance uttered a cry of joy.

" Ah, the good priest that saved my life where—ah"—turning, "you are there good Father." She held her two hands out towards him. Ambrose gave her his hand with a smile. She drew him towards her so that he had to sit on the bed near at her side, kissed the hand she held then laid it on the child."

" So then there is trouble because of the *way* the holy Father had to save my life, and that is why the other priests and the Commissaire are here. Pouska the low human dog of a high

lordly hound brought them." This was said half to herself. She reclined back on the pillows, adding. "Messieurs, what the Father did was necessary to save my life. There should be no immodesty in the presence of death ; I feel no shame in what the Father did, for—there was no shame."

At this point Ambrose rose and began speaking.

"Here almost at the birth-act of this child let its work begin. You here shall receive the first import of the mighty mission of that little sleeping child . Know then the world is so vile it needs another Saviour. The first was Christ; there lies the second Saviour, but it is a woman! Her mission is to preach and teach the true religion of human brotherly love. I am her guardian, the servant now of a power that will supplant the great church itself!" Gradually as Ambrose spoke he seemed to gather a strength of utterance and a sublimity of mien

that became less and less earthly. He continued: "The mother there has told you she has visited the univercœlum of the astral bodies *and remembers it!* I shall be, in my turn, an understanding servant of the unseen inhabitants of space. The doctor there is one already, and, together, we have to protect the mother and rear the child, ministering to the fleshly envelope while the Astrals use our organs to brain its mind. A few hours ago I was a simple priest." His voice rang out— "Fathers, that church is inimical to the church of God, the church of Creation. Celibacy is a crime that outrages nature and nature came with creation which is God. The New Avatar there will teach that. The world confounds the sweetness of modesty with the prurient abomination of mock pudicity. The child there when grown to woman's estate in her own faultless person will show this world what hold the beauty of a perfect woman, clothed

only with the innocence of exquisite guilelessness, can take on wholesome minds, and the thronged theatre shall feel the supremacy of nature's master hand and know no lust!"

"The love that makes man wish to help his fellow—*SHE* shall teach; the love that makes the rich share his surplus with the needy—*SHE* shall teach; the cleanly wholesomeness of free and natural love—*SHE* shall teach; and that marvelous process whereby life springs with convulsive joy from the union of the sexes—*SHE* shall teach! *That* is the mission of the New Avatar!"

The last few sentences were uttered in tones almost of agony, terrible, yet so tender that they sank like the entrancing harmony of a tragic hymn into the uttermost depths of the listeners present. Ambrose stood spell-bound, his eyes wide with worshiping exaltation. As his voice faded into silence Ambrose's unearthly eyes were raised in ecstasy. Suddenly there

was darkness, an illimitable waste of impenetrable blackness. Presently there seemed to be a motion, the blackness began to circinate within itself as it were. The room became charged with agasa, or magnetism, and soon the minutest spark of life conceivable was whirling amidst the blackness. The next moment, as if it had percussed against some obstruction it stopped, scintillated and flashed into a violet light illumining a limitless space, which can only be compared to the heavens on some ice-clear night wherein no star remained. An indescribable disturbance agitated the air; while a perception of sound rather than sound itself wailed in the ears of the listeners, something between a long-drawn sigh and the moaning of the wind. Next out of the violet, ether three forms slowly gathered, like gossamer cobwebs laid one on the other. Gradually it was possible to distinguish the nude figure of Ambrose clasping close the naked Con-

stance and holding on high in his hand the child. Waves of translucent carmine light played about the figures as they gradually developed, until a vision of the most sublime beauty was completely revealed. A mighty chorus of voices, apparently from some incredible distance, out of the circumambient violet-ether barely made audible these words:—

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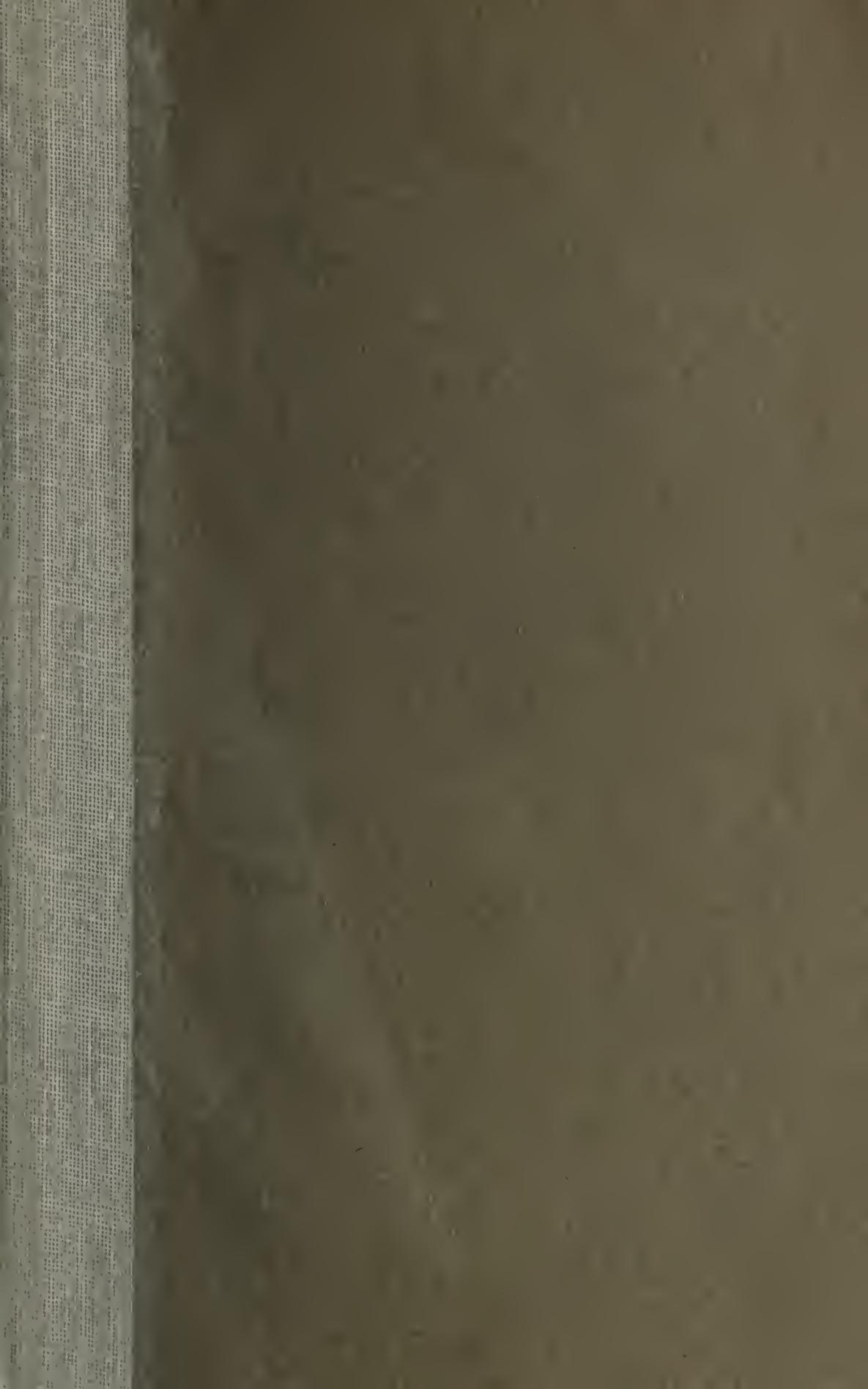
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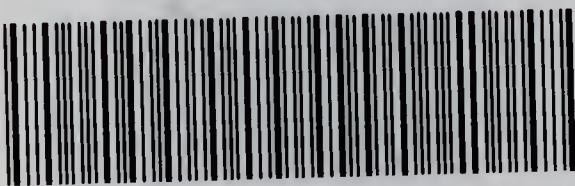








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